Social Media for Social Change

Social media can fuel spontaneous, organic and grassroots activism: from the Arab Spring of 2011 to the Québec student strike of 2012 and the Idle No More movement of 2013.

Activists can use social media to start petitions, spread the word, mobilize support, educate the public and put pressure on decision-makers at every level.

Choosing Your Online Tools

- Every online tool has a different purpose.
- You can’t use a hammer for every job, a megaphone for every cause or the same social media tools for every campaign.
- Always ensure your tactics support your strategy.
- Experiment creatively with new social media tools to determine whether they have a potential for organizing.

When to be Online and When to be On-The-Streets

- Unions must be where our members are. We must also take our message to the public.
- Online tools provide many ways to get involved.
- Don’t rely on Facebook event confirmations to estimate real-life attendance.
- Don’t forget those who aren’t online. Continue to reach out in traditional ways.
- Use social media to enhance, but never to replace face-to-face organizing.
- Coordinate your social media campaigning with traditional tools and tactics.
Building Online Community

- Engage your audience and start conversations - they call it “social” media for a reason.
- Create new entry points to join your movement or cause.
- Use photos as social media through photo sharing/tagging on Facebook.
- Reciprocate! Reply to posts, retweet or share content and give other users props.
- Show the love! When someone new follows you, thank them and give them a shout-out!

Moving People Up the Ladder of Engagement

As organizers, it is our job to find potential supporters and provide the tools to get more involved. Let’s turn passive supporters into active supporters and help active supporters grow into leaders. Moving our supporters up the ladder of engagement is the goal of any good organizer.

STEP 1: Reads your content on friend’s feed.
STEP 2: ‘Likes’ or ‘retweets’ your post.
STEP 3: ‘Likes’ or ‘follows’ your Fan Page.
STEP 4: Visits your website or other resource.
STEP 5: Shares your content with a message of support.
STEP 6: Puts their own spin on your content when sharing with others.
STEP 7: Makes direct contact with you or your group.
STEP 8: Participates in your action or event, etc.
STEP 9: Actively recruits others to do the same.
STEP 10: Becomes an active organizer and takes on a leadership role.

Facebook: Knowing Who Your Friends Are

- Intended for a community of already connected people.
- Is an extension of existing social networks.
- Friends must be confirmed and access must be granted.
- For sharing information, photos, videos and links.
- Can send and receive private messages.
- Can maintain personal “profiles,” organizational “pages,” interest-based “groups,” or upcoming “events.”
- Friends can “like,” comment or “share” content.

Twitter: Tweet and They Will Follow

- Micro-blog that allows users send out small bursts of information to the general public.
- Users broadcast messages no longer than 140-characters.
- Can share information, photos, videos and links.
- By “following” others, users create their own customized micro-news digest of real-time headlines.
- Everyone can become part of the media and share commentary.
- Goal: attract as many followers as possible and get them “retweeting” your messages. This amplifies your reach.
“Tweet”? #WTF?

A “tweet” is a micro-post or an update in 140 characters. It is your opportunity to break news, become a commentator or just help spread the word. It is like writing in headlines.

@ Mentioning Other Tweeters

Every account on twitter has a unique “handle.” It can be a person, organization or campaign. On Twitter, the CLC is @CanadianLabour and the OFL is @OFLabour, their presidents are active on Twitter under the handles @Hassan_Yussuff and @SidRyan_OFL. Putting the “@” symbol in front of a Twitter handle turns it into a link to the other user’s account.

# Hashtags

Putting the “#” symbol in front of a term in a tweet converts that word into a link to a digest of other tweets using that same keyword or topic (ie. #StopHarper or #CanLab). Any word or series of words can be turned into a hashtag, but they cannot use punctuation or spaces. Users can follow hashtags to stay informed about a particular topic. Including hashtags in your tweets helps new people find your tweets to amplify your message.

The Meme is The Message

- A meme is an idea, behaviour or style that spreads from person to person within a culture (Examples: WAZZUP?! - WHERE’S THE BEEF? - LOVE, HOPE AND OPTIMISM!).
- Use creative, funny and inspirational images to get others sharing your message.

Framing Your Campaign Message

- Stay on the message of the campaign you are supporting.
- Use more than text (pictures, infographics, memes).
- Tailor your message to your audience.
- Watch for jargon.
- Make sure to ask your reader to take action.
- Use funky profile photos to get others to show support for your campaign.
Earning Your Audience

- Niche your knowledge: make yourself a “go-to” person.
- #OH Breaking news: stay topical and current.
- Specialize, but stand out: perspective is everything!
- Old-idea + new perspective = new idea.
- Quality over quantity: Create value and earn loyalty.
- Be shareworthy: make it eyecatching, fun and inspirational.
- Make ‘em listen: tweet @ journalists/celebrities/politicians.
- The full court press: add a sense of urgency.
- Street cred: building your online “Klout.”

Develop Your Online Personality

- Be true to yourself.
- Write to your interests.
- Become an expert.
- Show your human side.
- Don’t be a TwitterBot (don’t bury people in retweets). Quality versus quantity!
- Add commentary.
- Have a sense of humour ... and STAY POSITIVE!

Tips for Writing Short, Punchy Messages

- Be USEFUL to the reader to build loyal followers.
- Be TOPICAL and fresh (old news is not news).
- Provide the reader with a sense of URGENCY.
- It is always better to be CLEVER than angry.
- Put your own SPIN on it.
- On Twitter, write hashtags into your tweets and use the “4U” approach to cut characters (eg. “Does a low-wage economy worry u? Protect #WorkersRights & help to #StopHarper!”).
- Do all of the above in an ULTRA-SPECIFIC way.

Tips for Time Management

- Cross-post, but don’t automatically integrate different social media profiles.
- Use software to manage multiple online accounts (eg. Hootsuite).
- Scheduling your posts to Facebook and Twitter.
- Uploading email lists to your Facebook page.
- Make personal and offline requests of allies for social media support.

A Quick Note on Etiquette

- If you wouldn’t say it into a megaphone, don’t post it online! Assume that anything you say on social media is public and permanent!
- As a community builder, strive to be inclusive. Abusive language, swearing, defamation, libel, slander, harassment, or discrimination should not be tolerated.
- Don’t feed the trolls! Participate in conversations and challenge reactionary ideas, but know when to ignore toxic people who want to demoralize you and eat up your time.
Glossary of Twitter Jargon

Twitter users have developed a lingo that you need to learn to follow the discussions. Also, acronyms and condensed words are commonly used to keep messages under 140 characters. Here are some examples of common Twitter terms:

**Tweet** – Messages posted on Twitter are called “tweets.” You can say, “I was tweeting throughout the meeting.”

**ReTweet** – or **RT** – When you share the tweet of another user with all of your Twitter followers (Credit is given to the original user by starting the message with “RT @CanadianLabour”, followed by the message).

**Follow**: Subscribe to a user’s Tweets or updates.

**#FF**: “Follow Friday” is a shout-out to followers. This is an informal way to boost your favourite tweeters.

**Mention** – or **@** – The “@” symbol is a way of referring to another Twitter user (for example, @Hassan_Yussuff means you’re either responding to a tweet from CLC President Hassan Yussuff or you’re talking about him in your tweet).

**OH** – “Overheard” means that something is a rumour or unconfirmed news, e.g.: “OH @TargetCanada is leaving town & leaving 18,000 workers unemployed. #FastFashion fails #RetailWorkers!”

**Tweeps** – Twitter people that follow each other from one social media/network to another.

**Hashtags** – or **#** – Hashtags are words or acronyms that begin with the “#” symbol. They are used when many people are tweeting about the same topic or from the same event. They link to a digest of other tweets on the same topic. Hashtags cannot include punctuation or spaces, but upper and lower case letters can help with readability and won’t affect the link. The best way to track what the different hashtags mean is at www.Hashtags.org, which tracks tags by popularity over time.

Here are a few useful hashtags to get you started:

- **#NDP, #LPC and #CPC** - tweets about Ontario’s political parties
- **#CanLab** - tweets about Canadian labour news
- **#CdnPoli** - tweets about Canadian politics (other examples: #OnPol, #HaliPoli, etc)

For a list of Canadian political twitter hashtags, check out: [http://politwitter.ca/page/canadian-politics-hash-tags](http://politwitter.ca/page/canadian-politics-hash-tags)

**Direct Message** – When you want to directly communicate with another Twitter user without your message being posted publicly, you can send a direct message.

**Troll** – Someone who constantly attacks over social media and provokes toxic debates.

Other Social Media Platforms

There are many other social media platforms, apps or tools ... and new ones are being launched every day. Some will have potential for campaigning, others will not. Test them out, share your experiences with other activists, and keep growing the movement. Here are some other tools:

- **Instagram** - Photosharing app for smartphones: [www.Instagram.com](http://www.Instagram.com)
- **Pinterest** - Bulletin board for sharing style, products and ideas: [www.Pinterest.com](http://www.Pinterest.com)
- **LinkedIn** - Online platform for sharing professional connections: [www.LinkedIn.com](http://www.LinkedIn.com)
Resources

- **Campaign Gears** - Specializing in multi-faceted campaigning, mixing best-practices for traditional in person campaigning with cutting edge online techniques to progressive social change: [www.CampaignGears.com](http://www.CampaignGears.com)
- **Labour Start** - Where trade unionists start their day on the net: [ca.LabourStart.org](http://ca.LabourStart.org)
- **Journal of New Organizing** - Developing the practice of engagement organizing and training leaders (New Organizing Institute): [www.neworganizing.com](http://www.neworganizing.com)
- **Actipedia** - An open-access, user-generated database of creative activism (the YES Lab): [www.actipedia.org](http://www.actipedia.org)
- **Tent Social** - Social media design blueprint: [www.tentsocial.com/Portals/196912/images/social_media_design_blueprint.png](http://www.tentsocial.com/Portals/196912/images/social_media_design_blueprint.png)
- **Mashable** - Covering the top social media news on topics like Facebook, YouTube, Gmail, Twitter, Amazon, Pinterest and more: [www.mashable.com](http://www.mashable.com)
- **LeadNow** - An independent advocacy organization that brings generations of Canadians together to achieve progress through democracy: [www.LeadNow.ca](http://www.LeadNow.ca)
- **AVAAZ** - Internet organizing that allows thousands of individual efforts, however small, to be rapidly combined into a powerful collective force: [www.AVAAZ.org](http://www.AVAAZ.org)
- **Change.org** - The world’s largest petition platform, empowering people everywhere to create the change they want to see: [www.Change.org/en-CA](http://www.Change.org/en-CA)

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