

## Choose the Right Platform for Member Communications

What's the best social media platform to use when it comes to keeping in touch with your members? It depends on what kind of content you typically share with them and the topics you are most likely to mutually discuss. Here, Nick Panadiscio, chief operating officer at Wolfcom Public Relations (Hoboken, NJ), breaks down his guidelines for when to use three of the most popular online platforms.

### Facebook

Best for: "Connecting with people on a personal level," Panadiscio says. That can include asking people's opinions on an issue, posting intimate or provocative photos that drive home the importance of your cause, or even a quick "Happy Birthday!" on a member's Facebook wall.

### Twitter

Best for: "Sharing links to articles, short messages and updates and being part of a bigger online conversation," says Panadiscio. Thanks to its searchable hashtags, Twitter provides a great way to build name and brand recognition whenever a national or international news event brings your cause and/or your organization to the fore.

### LinkedIn

Best for: "Professional networking," says Panadiscio. "LinkedIn is a great way to do professional networking, such as connecting with businesses, forming partnerships with other nonprofits or finding potential employees." Compared to Facebook and Twitter, more formal language is appropriate here, but that doesn't mean you should be shy about chatting up your LinkedIn connections.

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## VOLUNTEERS WITH FUNDRAISING KNOW-HOW

### Seek Out Members with Capital Campaign Experience

Searching for high-profile new members who can make an impact right away, or wondering which current members are ripe for promoting to committee and major-gift development work — perhaps even a role as a board chair? Bill Tedesco, CEO of DonorSearch (Marriottsville, MD), a consulting firm that helps organizations isolate their best major-gift prospects, suggests screening for candidates who already have experience making major-gift asks.

"To do it right, most of the time they have to have some sort of training," Tedesco says. "For your most effective representatives, that sort of training has probably already happened. The ideal volunteer representative for a fundraising organization is someone who's already done a capital campaign somewhere else, who's been trained by another nonprofit. If that person is willing to advocate for your cause, they already understand it at a very basic level. It's very difficult to go out and ask a person for a \$100,000 gift."

However, if a candidate doesn't have the experience but is willing to put in the time, then training him or her yourself is a good second option. "It's part of where you actually show them what you want them to do for you," Tedesco explains. "You actually have consultants — they call it board development or leadership development — who try to brainstorm where you set the goals. So you would have the staff who would actually work with them. There are books and training sessions where you role-play."

In fact, Tedesco says, "I'm always surprised, at the bigger schools and the more mature shops, how orchestrated the training is."

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## Encourage Members to Talk It Up

**Q.** *What's the best way to encourage members to share the news and spread the word about your organization?*

"If you are providing services to your members they value, then they will naturally want to promote you. Ask members what services they most want — you will likely be surprised — and then deliver on those services. Recognize members who are referring additional members with a mention on social media channels, because this promotes both of you and encourages more referrals. Lastly, send handwritten thank-you notes to members who are promoting you. This personal touch is so rare and so thoughtful, members will be sure to talk about you." — Catherine Chapman, founder of the philanthropic consulting firm Fullanthropy (Louisville, KY)

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## Manager-to-Member Ratio

How many members should a paid employee be able to manage? While the answer will depend on several factors — number and type of member programs offered, demographic makeup of membership, frequency/type of member communications and more — some estimate a 1 – 8,000 ratio as a manageable number.

## Membership Drive Idea

- Next time you kick off a visible membership campaign, announce that any new members will automatically be entered into a drawing to win one of three free memberships. If they win, their dues will be reimbursed or extended for another year at no additional cost.

## Membership Building Idea

- Plan an event around a holiday theme. Create a holiday invitation (Independence Day, Columbus Day, Halloween, Thanksgiving) and ask each member to distribute invitations to friends and associates.