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TECHNOLOGY TOOLS

Which Technology Tool is Right for Your Program's Needs?

Whether you are connecting with your membership, marketing your cause or recruiting volunteers, selecting the right technology tool can help maximize your efforts. Use these steps to discover what your technology needs are.

1. What Are Your Goals?

Think about goals and objectives first. Tools second. Do you want to recruit volunteers or retain the volunteers you already have? These may require different tools. Careful evaluation at this step will help you avoid spending time cultivating the wrong technology tool for your goals and objectives.

2. Ask Questions

Ask questions of your audience to determine what their communication preferences are. Ask your volunteers how they would prefer to receive information about your program? **Ask yourself what your communication needs are.** Do you need a better way to disperse a newsletter? Do you want one-way or two-way communication abilities?

3. Evaluate Your Needs

Think about:

- How will this technology tool fit into your current strategies and tasks for volunteer communication?
- Who will be responsible for posting or keeping information current?
- What frequency of dispatches will you need to keep this up to date and your needs met?
- Which technology tool matches your volunteer demographic best?
- How will you use this technology tool? For…
    - Recruitment
        - direct/indirect solicitation for volunteers (phone, email, texting)
    - Retention
        - building and strengthening your volunteer community

- Recognition
  - promoting outstanding volunteers online
  - invitations to volunteer recognition events
- Marketing/Publicity
  - posting of general information
- Event Notification
  - fundraising events
- Generating Interest in a Campaign or a Cause
  - notification of special interest news

4. Listen First

Explore the communication tools available by signing up as an individual first. Listen to the type and frequency of information that is being shared. (website, blog, social networking, email, e-newsletter, RSS feed, texting) This will help you gain familiarity with the technology tool and help determine its usefulness to your program.

5. Establish Guidelines

Once you have determined which tool is best for your program, establish guidelines for its use and task assignments for staff and volunteers to keep communication postings up to date.

6. Create Templates

Establish a consistent identity for your communications in tone or visual presentation. Document any systems for using the technology to maintain the consistency.

7. Maintain Relevance

"If you build it, they will come" does not apply to social marketing or online media. Information posted online must always be fresh! Keeping information posted online or via other technology up to date and relevant is imperative to keeping people interested in what you are communicating. Maintaining relevance takes time and should be factored into your decision of which technology tool is best for your program. Make it easy to remix your content. Keep it happy. Keep it fun. Keep it easy.

Common Technology Tools Utilized by Nonprofits

- **Email Distribution List** – managed or inhouse
- **Social Networking** – Facebook/MySpace
- **E-Newsletter** – Constant Contact, Exact Target, Vertical Response, etc.
- **Blog** – eBlogger, typepad, etc.
- **Online Videos** – YouTube, Google Video, etc.
- **Online Photo Galleries** – Flickr, Picassa, etc.
- **Mobile Phone Notifications** – texting, mass texting, tweets, etc.