

Effectively Utilizing Facebook to Promote Your ASPIRE Program

Opening:

Hi, I'm Annie Klug, Communications Manager at Oregon Mentors. I am here today in partnership with the Oregon Student Access Commission, also called OSAC for short. Today I am going to talk to you about Facebook because it has become such a critical part of today's communication landscape.

Introduction:

My goal is to share the basic things you need to know about Facebook and how it can and can't help you share information about your program. This podcast is focused on connecting your program with volunteers and the community.

Body:

The first ever social media site, sixdegrees.com, was created in 1997. Since then, thousands of sites have popped up, all with the same goal of reaching out to a wide audience with the touch of a few buttons. Social media is about establishing an ongoing bond with your audience that feels positive and valuable.

The nice thing is that social media is an "opt-in" system, meaning you only participate if you want to. You seek information, share your stories and photos, and follow what friends are doing, but it's important that you realize none of this is happening **TO** you. It's happening with you. So don't be afraid, be informed on how to best participate.

Before you begin utilizing Facebook to promote your program, you must be able to answer the following questions - How much time do you have to build and manage your Facebook presence? What are your main objectives in using Facebook? How will you know you're accomplishing these goals? And finally, how do you plan to engage your audience?

It's not enough to join in because "everyone else is on Facebook" or you heard somewhere that a very large nonprofit made \$10,000 in a Facebook fundraising campaign. Your answers to the previous questions should act as your roadmap for if and where you plug into this phenomenon.

In addition, you have to know your school or site's social media policy prior to planning your page. Does it allow you to set up a Fan Page? Are you permitted to connect with teens via that page? Before you even get started, be sure to clearly understand the parameters for your social media engagement.

Facebook was originally created as a way to develop and connect networks of people. The site currently has more than 900 million active users, which makes it the most used social networking service in the world.

Facebook allows individuals to create profiles and organizations to create fan pages. To get started learning about how Facebook works, you'll want to first create a profile page for yourself. Each

individual can only have one profile per Facebook's rules. As you're interacting with others as an individual via your Facebook profile, you can send "friend requests" to people you know. You'll see how your friends' status updates appear in your news feed (which is the first page you see as you sign in). While exploring, pay attention to what people are posting – which items get the most comments and what gets "liked" often.

Once you are ready, your individual profile will then allow you to create a 'Fan Page' for your local ASPIRE program. As a nonprofit program, you'll want to choose the "Company, Organization or Institution" page format option. On this page, you'll include background information about your program, contact information, photos and anything else that your audience would like to access. Most importantly, you'll want to link your Facebook page to the OSAC Web site or your profile Web page on oregonmentors.org to encourage more traffic on both.

If someone "likes" your program's ASPIRE Fan Page, that person will be able to view each status update made to the page. This is the primary way nonprofits engage on Facebook.

Now, let's take a step back and consider how your ASPIRE program can use Facebook:

"Friending" someone is the act of creating a connection between two people's profiles on Facebook. The terminology is different when we're talking about your ASPIRE page. Instead of "friending" ASPIRE, individuals on Facebook can click on the "like" button. All the individuals that click on the like button are called "fans". Your fans are the people that will see the status updates that you write about on your program's ASPIRE page.

Oregon Mentors posts daily status updates on its Page to share quick information with our fans. This is the best way to get on your fans' radar because it's like having a daily conversation about different aspects of your program.

Keep in mind that outside of the first time a fan finds and "likes" your program's page, it's unlikely they'll go back to it again. Rather, they'll only see your latest information sharing via their News Feed.

Groups are a way of enabling people to come together online to share information and discuss specific subjects. A group is made up of individuals with Facebook profiles, not Fan Pages. So while your ASPIRE Program won't be in a group, you could create a group for all your volunteers, or for all the ASPIRE staff in your region. Facebook groups can be made private so only the group admin has the power to invite or accept individuals into that group, keeping it somewhat secure. Groups are similar to Fan Pages, but contain a different set of features, so they're great to engage more private conversations.

Conclusion:

As I conclude, I'd like to share my recommendations when starting to engage on Facebook.

- First, allow your audience to engage in your Facebook page. Ask questions in your status updates and encourage them to share their opinions. You shouldn't engage in social media if

you want to control all of the content – that’s not what it’s meant for. Only sensor content when it’s absolutely necessary.

- Keep your content up-to-date and be sure to post regularly. Facebook has allowed us to quickly communicate with ever-increasing groups of people, so now everyone expects new information at lightning speed! If you have old information on your profile or you don’t have time to post at least a couple of status updates per week, it may not be right for you.
- Utilize your current volunteers and supporters as early adopters of your Fan Page. Reach out to your existing friends and ask them to “like” your page. The more followers you have, the more likely you are to gain even more.
- Keep your content short and digestible. Most people won’t watch a 20 minute video on your Facebook page, but they may check out ten two-minute clips posted over a number of weeks. Make it easy for them.
- Finally, watch your statistics. All social media sites provide you with reports on your traffic, comments, and activity for the week. Is it working? Look at these numbers to see if you’re accomplishing your outreach goals with these new channels and adjust accordingly.

Closing:

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