

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINE FOR CLUBS / ASSOCIATIONS

The use of social media brings both opportunities and challenges for sports organisations, and therefore softball clubs / associations. Social media is an important tool to connect with our audience and the media in order to promote our game.

The following guideline provides a process to help create a systematic course of action for the successful use of social media.

The guideline consists of a game plan with specific recommendations on how to develop and maximise social media as an effective tool. The guideline assumes that the clubs / associations are not using social media nor have a formal plan.

Social Media Game Plan

1: Goals and Outcome

- ❖ Write down at least three social media goals, for example:
 - Create brand awareness
 - Build a community
 - Increase audience
 - Generate website traffic
 - Build new partnerships
 - Provide Customer Service
- ❖ Once goals are determined, you can put tools in place to track outcomes

(For example: *For Instagram we will share photos that reflect the family nature of our softball community. We will do this by posting 3 photos a week that will achieve 30 likes plus 10 comments each.*)

2: Social Media Assessment

Audience

Sporting organisations have a diverse audience: Athletes, coaches, volunteers, partners, sponsors, fans etc.

- ❖ Determine who exactly you want to connect with (target audience) and set up your plan accordingly
- ❖ By targeting the most prominent demographic on each social media platform your audience will grow quicker
- ❖ If you are already have social media platforms use these to find out more about your audience; monitoring tools like Facebook Insights, Twitter analytics can give you basic demographic information (for more information see 4: Test and Evaluate)

Social Media Platforms

If you are not using social media platforms yet, think about your goals, target audience and identify the appropriate platforms:

- ❖ **Facebook:** has the potential to attract a large audience, it is an essential tool for clubs / associations to engage and connect with the softball community. It also provides a forum to share opinions, answer fan questions as well as provide insights into demographic information.
- ❖ **Twitter:** allows short posts/messages (140 characters) to your audience. For sports organisation it is a good way to connect with relevant partners and the media.
- ❖ **Instagram:** Instagram is a photo content platform where people share their softball experiences with each other. It can provide an insight into the clubs / associations and the sport and thereby strengthen the ties with the softball community.
- ❖ **Pinterest:** Could be used as a photo gallery to archive and promote softball images. People can thereby relive memorable moments and get to know the sport through visual content.
- ❖ **YouTube:** Could be used as a platform to display high quality video content from tournaments

Note: These are the five platforms SNZ has identified as most appropriate for achieving their goals. Not all of these maybe necessary or relevant to your organisation. As an club / association you may have a different focus. There are also other social media platforms that maybe more relevant to your needs.

If you are already using social media platforms:

- ❖ Every social media platform should have a unique focus, if you cannot figure out the purpose of a certain platform, consider deleting it
- ❖ Prevent two major social media mistakes: leaving a platform neglected, and automatically posting the same content across all your social media platforms— which increases the likelihood of your social media audience treating your social messaging as spam. In order to avoid that, identify the unique purpose of each platform.
 - ⇒ *We will use (social media platform) for (purpose of this platform) in order to help (organisational goal).*

3: Social Media Implementation / Improvement

Before you set up a social media page there are a few things you will need to get started:

- ❖ Set up information
 - Cover/profile photo
 - Link to website
 - Lengthy “About” description of your organisation. Use this space to show visitors who you are, what you do and why they should care
 - Contact details etc.
- ❖ Etc. (Images, image consistency, bio update)

Content

- ❖ Determine the sources for the content (mixture of own and shared content recommended)
- ❖ Possible sources are:
 - Photos/video of events, athletes
 - News articles
 - Coaching, educational resources
 - Athlete content
- ❖ Theme your platforms during tournaments to promote the event e.g. appropriate cover images
- ❖ Promote tournaments by creating a competition
Note: Be aware of the rules and regulations for Facebook competitions:
https://www.facebook.com/page_guidelines.php#promotionsguidelines
- ❖ Determine when your audience is online, posts can be scheduled for these times (scheduling posts weeks or months ahead saves valuable time)
- ❖ How often you post depends on the quality and relevance of your content. Be careful not to spam your audience with irrelevant information
- ❖ Develop an annual content plan to organise your publishing process (an example for a template is provided)
- ❖ Get social media inspiration from other relevant sports organisations e.g. SNZ, World Baseball Softball Confederation
- ❖ Assess resources: Determine how much time you can devote for social media each week

4: Test and Evaluate

- ❖ Once your plan has been implemented and platforms are in place you are now ready to measure your social media platforms
- ❖ Determine which tool best suits your objectives. There are a number of websites that allow you to manage multiple social media platforms from one page, e.g. Hootsuite (www.hootsuite.com/) which comes with a free version to monitor multiple platforms and accounts on one dashboard, the Pro version provides additional analytics
- ❖ Social media platforms usually come with basic analytical data i.e. Facebook Insights, Twitter analytics, Google analytics (for websites)
- ❖ Instagram does not have an analytics section, you would have to use other pages, for example Iconosquare (www.iconosquare.com/), which provides an overview over the user growth history, most liked posts, best times to post etc.
- ❖ There are many other tools with free versions or free trials which you can use according to your needs

Note: Not everything can be quantified