

Social Media for Bainbridge Island Non-Profits
Created for One Call for All by Trish Bittman & Rebecca Rockefeller, October 2016

Bainbridge Island residents currently use Facebook as a digital “third place,” a space where they can connect with each other for local news, personal connections, humor, inspiration, discussions about all manner of subjects, referrals, rants, and raves. It’s easy to deride social media as a blight on society, but the reality is more complicated than that. Many people on the island find themselves more connected with their real life neighbors thanks to the time they spend engaging with them on Facebook. People keep coming back for a couple of reasons: the hit of endorphin that comes with each “like” and comment, the positive biofeedback that comes from being seen and from having your own seeing of others met with being seen in return, and the accumulation of social capital in the form of friends, followers, “likes,” comments, and shared content. Nonprofits can join the digital community and reap all sorts of benefits, but there are some general rules of the road to keep in mind:

- Be visual. Use images. Social media engagement is largely driven by compelling images. Use your own images or ones that you find via a search for copyright-free images.
- Be a participant. React to and share posts by individuals, other nonprofits, local businesses, and causes that relate to your own mission. Engage in the content posted by others whose respect you would like to earn.
- Be generous. Become a resource of inspiration and information related to your mission. Talk about what your organization is up to, but also mention the good things others are doing, the strengths of our local community and our world. Come from a place of abundance instead of scarcity.
- Be positive. If you’d like people to share your content, post content that they want to see and share on their own timeline. Content can mention serious issues so long as a solution is offered as well, and so long as the images attached bring pleasure instead of sorrow or fear.
- Be genuine. This is a small community, and people know each other. You can use your own voice, or develop a voice specific to your organization instead of using words that have been stripped of humor and emotion.
- Be aware of donor fatigue. You can keep the “donate” button up on your page year round, but active appeals for donations should be kept to the sweet spot where people see your request but don’t feel tempted to “hide” your posts because that’s all they ever see. Think of the NPR pledge drives - Keep your active drive focused, with a clearly stated beginning and end.
- Show gratitude. Thank people and businesses whenever possible, tagging them to be sure they see your posts. Show them with images and text how their donations, volunteer labor, kindness, and other assistance is having a positive impact on your organization. When you share content from another person or organization, always tag them in your post to thank them for sharing it with you first. To tag a page or business, type in “@theirfacebookaccountnamehere” to generate the hyperlink.
- Be on Island Time. Check your Facebook page “Insights” tab to track the timing of your most popular posts (the ones that attract the most “likes” and other positive reactions, comments, and shares). If in doubt, post on Monday through Friday during main morning and evening commuter times to coincide with island commuters on ferries and buses.

- Go easy on yourself. Use the tools provided on your Facebook page's "Publishing Tools" tab to schedule posts for automatic publishing at the time and date of your choice. You can also backdate posts here to show the full history of your organization even if your page is new.

- Consider increasing your personal presence on Facebook if you're not already there. If you're new to this part of the social media universe, consider a basic level of engagement: "Friend" your real-life friends, wish them each a happy birthday when that happens (Facebook will remind you of friends' birthdays), and post once a day. If you're uncomfortable sharing personal information, share other content you like (it does not have to pertain to your nonprofit) - Cats are a perennial favorite, of course, but you can branch out to whatever topic interests you. Click on the appropriate reaction icon on at least a few friends' posts each day to show that you appreciate them, and comment when you are moved to do so. Even 15 minutes per day will help you build online connections that will bring a bit of endorphin into your friends' lives as well as your own, and this positive loop community will help you get the word out when you have an important event such as the Red Envelope campaign at your organization.