

Social Media Strategy for REEA Foundation

During the social media workshop with Spectra Asala from Global Giving, held at REEA in September 2012, it became clear how important a social media strategy for REEA would be.

What is social media?

Wikipedia defines social media as "interactive platforms via which individuals and communities create and share user-generated content... Social media is ubiquitously accessible... In the year 2012, social media became one of the most powerful sources for news updates through platforms like Twitter and Facebook."

In a nutshell, social media is media that is social. It encourages user interaction and the building and maintaining of relationships with wide communities of people. It offers real-time interaction and multiple platforms for people to communicate, share ideas and engage. It also offers a channel for news and updates.

Why does REEA need to become more social?

"Whether you are launching a start-up or leading an established company, you should start establishing your social media presence if you haven't already."

- Richard Branson

The fact is that we are currently experiencing a funding crisis, and this is an international phenomenon. People are feeling the pressure of economic turbulence and there is an international scaling back of funding. We need to explore all options available to us to raise funds and awareness for our cause.

Some statistics on growth in social media since 2009:

- Social Giving – up by 29%
- Health care – 13%
- Arts – 21%
- Education 40%
- International affairs 75%

Online fundraising strategy:

- Identify existing networks
- Build larger networks
- Identify communication methods
- Drive engagement/relationships
- Identify/target your audience
- Set goals – make a plan – evaluate

Social media is a powerful platform that will enable us to connect with more people, in ways which they are happy to engage. We need to tap into the ability of social media to help us build a bigger network.

What platforms are available to us?

Platforms such as **Facebook, Twitter and YouTube** need to be explored and either created or worked harder to create maximum advantage.

Facebook

REEA already has a Facebook group and a Facebook page, but we are not using this to its full advantage. We need to streamline this process and grow our network of followers through continuous engagements that encourage people to like and share our page.

We need to find someone at REEA to take ownership of the page and run with daily updates, photographs of our facilities, our residents, the hostel, events we hold etc. We could also look at profiling the various people at REEA. There are many options available, we need to get creative. We also need to identify who would be interested in sharing our content, and join other networks and groups to grow our circle.

Twitter

There are around 26 million Twitter users, so this is a platform that could be beneficial to explore. Gregor has already created a Twitter account. We need to gain followers and Tweet daily on happenings at REEA.

Some topics to consider:

- Hostel
- Bookshop
- Vegetable garden
- REEA River Market
- Charity shop
- Pet food delivery

We also need to bear in mind that Twitter is all about creating conversations. We need to be proactive, stimulating and fun. We can also use this as a platform to educate followers on the condition of epilepsy and dispel the myths that surround it.

YouTube

We can explore the possibility of creating a REEA YouTube channel and post weekly updates via video. We can use this platform for a virtual tour of our facilities, interviews with staff, clips from our market and so on. This will help to make our social media voice louder. We can also cross-promote our YouTube videos using Facebook and Twitter for an integrated social media approach.

Tips for social media success

1. *Identify the voice of your organisation* – who are we, what do we stand for? This voice will drive all of our social media interactions.
2. *Join the conversation around the cause* – we can use social media to join and start conversations on epilepsy and neurological disorders.
3. *Celebrate big news and milestones* – we need to be excited about things we have achieved. Celebrating helps to humanise the organisational voice. People want to be inspired, and success is inspirational. This will help us to engage with our followers.

4. *Make your networks work for you* – the purpose of social media is to create a village, or a network of involved people. We need people to buy into our ideas and to start talking about us, our cause and our people.
5. *Let your advocates author their own message* – the main drawcard of social media is that it is created from user generated content. We want people to start their own conversations about REEA. This will help to drive awareness and engagement, and hopefully donations as a result.
6. *Ask everyone to ask everyone* – social media is about sharing. People give because they like your organisation and what you stand for, so the more people we can reach, the better for our fundraising efforts.
7. *Reporting is very important* – Facebook has built-in analytics which can help to identify posts that generate conversation, numbers of new likes and so on. There is also a tool called Hootsuite which enables analytics to be drawn from other platforms such as Twitter. However the analytics feature is only available on the Pro version of the tool, which costs \$10 a month. This may be something to look into in the future.
8. *Create circles* – Our fans and followers are our inner circle, and their friends and contacts form part of our outer circle. The friends of friends and followers of followers form another circle outside of this. We need people in our circle to engage with us, so that their activities are visible to their circles, and thus if their circles engage with the cause, this reaches an even broader audience. Reaching this wide network is the most powerful feature of social media. Our circles should be made up of the following:
 - a. Members
 - b. Board
 - c. Management
 - d. Staff
 - e. Volunteers
 - f. Community members
 - g. Local business leaders, private clients, suppliers, donors, sponsors, family, friends
 - h. Local media, sports, arts and culture, religious groups.

What do we need to do?

We should explore the option of creating a media station for residents at the hostel. This will enable them to engage directly with our fans and followers and help to create more of a human voice for our organisation.

Best practices for social media:

- Make someone responsible
- Identify your audience
- Have a time line
- Create sense of urgency in your community
- Measure results against your goals
- Ask for more
- Make a plan
- Outline your tactics

- Get Creative
- Set deadlines
- Set miles stones to achieve

Don'ts:

- Don't jump straight to the "ask"
- Don't oversaturate your contacts with communication
- Don't think there is one solution
- Don't just use one type of media
- Measure and evaluate your success

Tasks:

1. *Create a strategy* – why should people want to engage with us? Why should they share our content? Why should they invest their time and loyalty in our cause?
2. *Map out communication plan* - Keep reminding people why we are important! We need to make sure that what we share is meaningful, relevant and useful, and in line with our values at REEA. What can we share? Photos, videos, information, activates and events, education on epilepsy. This plan also needs to include what content to share on which platforms.
3. *Start traditions* – these can be anything from a photo of the week to guessing games that people can participate in, or even a funny quote for the week. Traditions give followers something to look forward to and encourage engagement. We could also look at getting a local celebrity to endorse us, and get them to make regular posts on the site.
4. *Grow the mailing list* – social media can be used to gather email addresses for direct contact. We also need to explore other ways of growing our mailing list, so that we can encourage these users to engage with our social media channels. We need to start collecting email addresses at offline events, including fundraising days, at the River Market, at the charity shop and bookshop. We could even ask companies to donate their mailing lists. This will help us to begin building a database.

Conclusion

REEA has a lot to gain by integrating social media into our marketing activates. Not only do social media sites like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube serve as general hangouts, but they also provide opportunities to spread our message as an organisation, to connect with our target audience better and to get to know our potential sponsors better. Because social media has no hours of business, we can interact and connect at anytime from anywhere with an Internet connection.

REEA would benefit enormously by making use of social media in many areas, including joining conversations around epilepsy and promoting the idea of REEA as a green village with many products on offer. We can use social media to position REEA as a place to meet, a place to eat, a place to buy books, pet food, charity shop items, a place to bring your children to play, or for pony rides and riding lessons and last but not least as a place to buy flower and plants at our nursery.

We need to show people all of the many facets of REEA in order to follow our vision of becoming "A self - sustainable world class care facility".