



Digital Media Best Practices

The digital media best practices page covers national trends surrounding commonly used digital/social outreach channels, their best use scenarios, and recommendations based on today's trends.

When a family-run organization or system of care community asks which digital platforms and social networks they should be using, there are three important items to consider:

1. **Target Audience**—Who is your target audience(s) and where are they most represented online and on social media?
2. **Objectives and Purpose**—What is the purpose of your online activities? How will your social media messages and content support your larger social marketing/communications strategy? What is the action that you want your engaged audiences to do? Is it to engage in services and supports? To increase awareness about children's mental health or the systems of care approach?
3. **Process and Resources**—What resources do you have to devote to your social and digital media strategy? Consider potential writers, graphic designers, social media publishers, and community managers. Who are the key approvers on messaging and rapid responses as needed? How about paid media budget for social media amplification? How will you evaluate your efforts?

Below is a list of commonly used social media networks and digital/social outreach channels, their best-use scenarios, and complementary app suggestions based on today's trends and insights. Because your audiences, topics, and campaign content will vary from effort to effort, it's important to regularly gather insights and analytics from your profiles and adapt your efforts to your findings.

Facebook

Demographic: According to [Pew Research Center](#), 69% of U.S. adult internet users are on Facebook. Facebook is used widely across all age groups but has fallen sharply with teens. For ages 50–64, Facebook use significantly surpasses other social media platform use.

- **Business Page:** A Facebook Business Page is a public profile used to post information about your organization. In addition to posting capabilities like that of personal pages, a Facebook Business Page offers other functionalities such as hours of operation, website information, and call-to-action buttons, among other various templates based on type of services offered. Most importantly, Facebook Business Pages provides page access to a number of team members of varying roles and access to manage the page, including administrators, advertisers, and editors.
- **Best uses:** News and announcements; event highlights; photos or albums; online community conversation, and/or directly with organization; links to relevant articles or blog posts; videos.
- **Pro tip:** Use Facebook's own built-in scheduler to schedule posts ahead of time. Use its own built-in "Insights" feature to explore analytics information for your posts.
- **To hashtag or not to hashtag:** Hashtags on Facebook are helpful in tagging specific campaigns or initiatives. You can also use them to categorize a topic/conversation to aggregate them into a larger conversation. That said, it's not widely used for that since many personal posts and comments from Facebook audiences are not shared publicly.
 - **Facebook Live:** This popular feature allows you to broadcast video in real time for your followers to watch and/or interact. Great for special event moments and announcements, a behind-the-scenes look, and personalized video updates. For more info, go to www.live.fb.com/about.



Instagram

- **Demographic:** Now the second most used social media platform in the U.S. with 32% of adult Internet users, Instagram skews significantly toward younger adults (ages 18–34). It has outpaced Snapchat for Millennials, Gen X, Boomers, and beyond.
- **Best uses:** Creative or aesthetically pleasing photos (don't forget to use the built-in filters and photo effects to maximize visual impact); humor and aspirational content; short-lived content featuring videos or photos known as "Stories."
- **Complementary apps:**
 - **Hyperlapse:** Allows you to make time-lapse videos.
 - **Boomerang:** Allows you to make one-second video loops to post on Instagram (and often work on other social networks too).
 - **Layout:** Allows you to create collages of multiple photos in pre-designed grids.
 - **TagsForLikes:** Aggregates most-used hashtags to copy and paste into posts.
- **Hashtags:** On Instagram, the rules of hashtags are simple. The more hashtags you use, the more likes you're going to get. The downside is your posts might look a bit spam-like to your most engaged followers, so consider balancing which hashtags you use. Best practice allows for up to 10 hashtags within a post.
- **Pro tip:** When on mobile, you can easily discover popular hashtags to consider. Start writing a hashtag with the "#" sign and a dropdown menu with possible hashtags and their number of occurrences will appear.
- **Some popular mental health hashtags include:**
 - #mentalhealth
 - #mentalhealthmatters
 - #childrensmentalhealthmatters
 - #CMHAW2023
 - #mentalhealthawareness
 - #wellness
 - #mindfulness
 - #behavioralhealth

Twitter

Demographic: Nearly a quarter of U.S. adult Internet users are on Twitter. Unlike Facebook and Instagram, more men use Twitter than women.

- **Best uses:** News and announcements; customer service; links to articles or blog posts; micro-blogging; live tweeting from events; participation in trending conversations.
- **Other helpful apps:**
 - **Buffer:** Though not owned by Twitter, Buffer is a free app that allows you to draft and schedule up to 10 tweets ahead of time. Unlike Facebook, Twitter doesn't have its own native scheduler for posts.
 - **Hootsuite and TweetDeck** - very versatile free versions
- **Hashtags:** Twitter is the website that invented the hashtag. Use #hashtags on Twitter—but only up to two at a time! Any more than that and you run the risk of your content appearing to be spam. Be careful when creating new hashtags for your campaigns. Conduct research to ensure that the hashtag is not already taken or can be misread. When tweeting within the context of a larger conversation such as mental health or substance use, use hashtags that already have established user practice or communities



behind them. Don't hashtag random words—they have zero effect on search results.

- **Twitter Moments:** Consider using Twitter Moments, a feature within the Twitter app and website, to aggregate and publish a series of relevant tweets from a tweet-worthy moment together in one place. For your Twitter Moment, you can aggregate a mix of your tweets along with other relevant tweets from other accounts.

Tips and best practices:

1. The best Twitter profiles don't just share links; they begin conversations, interact with users, and have a personal tone behind the account while focusing on content directly related to your mission.
2. Twitter already automatically shortens all URLs while still showing the domain name by using a service like Bit.ly, which hides the domain name.

LinkedIn

- **Demographic:** 29% of U.S. adult Internet users are on LinkedIn. LinkedIn has grown from a job search platform to a strong social media platform for professional development.
- **Best uses:** Thought leadership and/or subject matter expertise; networking opportunities; partnership development; organizational news and announcements such as job opportunities; participation or moderation of topic-specific groups.
- **LinkedIn Showcase Pages:** These subpages allow organizations to showcase specific campaigns, initiatives, products, or sub-brands. Showcase Pages have their own destination and ability to post relevant content and amass followers, but they do not have all the features of a company/organization page.

Tips and best practices:

1. Company Pages are SEO-friendly. Google previews up to 156 characters of your page text, so be sure that your description leads with powerful, keyword-rich copy.
2. If your organization has a global presence, LinkedIn offers capabilities to show the page and Company Pages in 20 different languages.
3. Again, focus on content relevant to your mission.
4. LinkedIn is a great platform you recognize and/or thank corporate sponsors and partners.

YouTube

Video is now a staple in impactful communication strategies, YouTube (the world's second largest search engine) continues to be a strong social media platform for organizations to leverage. In addition to using YouTube as a way to host videos for the purpose of embedding them elsewhere, many organizations miss the opportunity to tap into the attentive and large audiences the platform has cultivated.

- **Demographic:** 63% of U.S. internet users are on YouTube. Among 18–49 age group, YouTube accounts for 66% of videos watched across devices and platforms.
- **Best uses:** Short-form videos; shareable and discoverable content; popular content (e.g., How-to, Music, or Animals).
- **Hashtags:** Similar to hashtags, YouTube tags index content on YouTube. There is no limit! Also, be sure to add concise descriptions to your videos to quickly inform your viewers whether or not the video content is indeed what they are looking for. The descriptions also contribute to discoverability in both YouTube and Google searches. (Remember, Google owns YouTube!)



Tips and best practices:

1. Consider the feedback you get from YouTube, such as views, comments, high engagement, what types of titles work best, when your videos are upvoted or downvoted.
2. Build a channel and playlists with a specific content area in mind.
3. Have a schedule. Viewers are much more likely to subscribe if they know you will be publishing content regularly (for ex. once a week on Tuesdays) than if they think you're just uploading content whenever it suits your need to embed a video on another website.
4. Include relevant links in your YouTube description as a way to pull audiences who are interested in learning more.

Newsletters

Best uses: Keeping targeted segment(s) informed and engaged; marketing events or products; one-way conversations; sharing interesting content or ideas.

Best time for engagement: Monday–Wednesday from 9 a.m.–12 p.m., in general. However, it's best to look at your own analytics and see when the users in your email list are the most engaged.

Tips and best practices:

1. Do not discount the newsletter just yet. Though we live in the age of social media, content going straight to someone's email inbox is still very effective.
2. Opening rates for nonprofit newsletters are around 20%. Click-through rates are around 5% or below. Don't feel as though your newsletter needs to get astronomically high open and click-through rates to be successful.
3. Use services like **MailChimp** or **Constant Contact**. Besides having pre-made templates, **the most valuable tool they provide is analytics** showing how many people opened, clicked, which subject lines were successful, which users are the most loyal, and who doesn't click at all. They also provide contextual data so you can understand how you perform compared to newsletters in similar industries
4. **Carefully craft your email subject—this is the most important aspect of your entire newsletter**, because it determines whether or not a recipient will open and read your content. Use sentence case in subject lines, and not uppercase. Additionally, uppercase in subject lines can trigger spam filters Examples:
 - Good subject line: The Social Marketing in Rural Communities webinar takes place June 23 - Register now!
 - Bad subject line: REGISTER FOR OUR WEBINAR TODAY!

Most importantly, keep your subject line short and test subject lines with your email list (most newsletter services will allow you to A/B test campaigns, too).

5. Carefully craft the first sentence of your newsletter. This first sentence is usually, in a pre-made template, above the header of your newsletter. This sentence is the first thing a user reads in the description section of their email and is second only to your subject line in determining whether someone opens your newsletter or not.
6. Categorize your email list. This way you can send targeted messages.
7. Stick with a schedule. People will come to expect your newsletter at a certain time of the week or month, and you don't want to disappoint them.
8. It's also recommended to send a newsletter at least once a month, but it's fine to send more frequent emails or alerts leading up to a large event.
9. Include a call to action in your emails. Monthly newsletters will often include many calls to action, but regular email updates should have one clear call to action such as following social media channels,



registering for an event, or major announcement.

Blogging

Blogging is still the best way to share longer, more complex ideas in spaces that are permanent and easily searchable. It's also one of the best ways to keep your website relevant and at the top of search engine results.

- **Self-hosted (most likely WordPress.org):** Self-hosted blogs let you set up on your own website's server. Though there are a few companies that provide this kind of service, the most widely used and most intuitive is WordPress. In fact, WordPress is often used as a content management system (CMS) and is more than suitable to use for an entire website—not just the blogging component. Self-hosted blogs are completely customizable, unlike blogs set up at different providers.
- **Best uses:** Longer-form content and complex ideas; content with multiple accompanying media; articles; beginning discussions; search engine optimization.
- **Best times for engagement:** Until your website or blog becomes a mainstay with your readership, the best times for engagement will coincide with your online engagement on social media as content shared there can be a good source of referrals to your website.
- **Complementary apps: WordPress** is known for its bevy of third-party plugins, all indexed at <https://wordpress.org/plugins/>.
 - Other popular self-host blogging options include Squarespace, Wix, and Joomla
- **Hashtags:** Hashtags will not work on your self-hosted blog (unless you find a plugin for it). However, blogs usually do use categories and tags to label and structure posts. But these will only serve to index posts within your own site and not on external websites.

Tips and best practices:

1. The ideal blog post length is however long it takes to cogently convey your message. Many find that 300-600 words is best for getting shares. Meanwhile 1,000+ words work best for getting comments. Remember, guidance on blog length changes from year to year and vary by audience. See what resonates with your audience and go from there.
2. A self-hosted blog, though sometimes easy to maintain, is usually too complex for someone who isn't a professional to set up. Consult with your web manager.

TikTok

TikTok is a short-form, video-sharing app where creators can share creative videos on any topic, According to [Pew Research](#), TikTok is now one of the top online platforms for U.S. teens: About two-thirds of teens say they have used TikTok with 16 percent of those saying they use it almost constantly. Over the last few years, it's popularity also grew with adult audiences as well.

- **Do you have the time to manage another platform?** On average, creators post videos three times a day on TikTok. Consider what platforms you are already using and are performing well. Do you have someone with the expertise to create and edit video? More importantly, is your audience primarily teens?
- **Videos:** Length can start at 15-second and now goes all the way up to 10 minutes.

Tips and best practices:

1. Typically, people turn to TikTok for fun, educational content. That's not to say content related to your mission won't do well, but it's a different style than used on more familiar sites like Facebook or Twitter.
2. If you are unfamiliar with TikTok, spend some time on the site and see if this would engage your audiences.
3. What can your organization add to the conversation? Informational videos, showing the impact of donations.



or volunteers can help build interest.

Snapchat

- **Demographic:** Snapchat is a mobile-first on-the-go social media community with daily engagement among youth and young adults (ages 12– 34).
- **Best uses:** One-way conversations (though you can snap with other users, for brands and organizations, it's best to keep your communication limited to your one-way story); humor; behind-the-scenes of events, meetings, or conferences; storytelling.
- **Best times for engagement:** Content on Snapchat is short-lived and lasts 24 hours. The best time to post is whenever the content you're recording is happening!
- **Snapchat Memories:** This app feature app allows you to save Stories in the cloud or your phone, giving you an archive of all your Snaps that can be shared again.

Tips and best practices:

1. Snapchat is an invasive storytelling tool—but it is easy to use that to your advantage. The best Snapchat Stories let us peer into a sector of someone's life, an organization's process, or a behind the scenes event that isn't normally publicly showcased.
2. Consider finding influencers in your community for a Snapchat takeover.
3. When in doubt, be funny. Everyone appreciates a laugh, especially Snapchat users.