

Responsible Social Media Use

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Sport Law & Strategy Group

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Providing strategic insight to the Canadian sport community through professional services in these areas:

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- Communications, Marketing & Event Management
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- Governance, Compliance, Risk Management, & Financial Management
- Strategic Planning, Research, Engaging Athletes, & Member Surveys



Introduction

- **Studying social media use since 2006**
- **21-year old head coach of teenagers**
- **Struggled with questions:**
 - What do I do if my athlete adds me to Facebook?
 - Is a social medium the most effective medium for my purposes?
 - What topics should not be discussed with athletes via social media?
- **Sport organizations lacked social media awareness / policy development**
- **Sport organizations and coaches lacked *clear* or *consistent* approaches for their social media use**

Outline

1. **What is social media (brief)**
2. **Two areas of social media – Internal and External**
 - a) Internal – strategic use by organizations
 - b) External – use by members (conduct) or about the organization
3. **Engagement**
4. **Building a social media strategy**
 - a) Objective, Audience, Media+Tactics, Strategy, Timeline+Results
5. **Steps toward earning from social media**
6. **Social Media Use Policy**
7. **Communication between athletes and coaches**
8. **Conduct issues**
9. **Social media tools for organizations (including coach guidelines)**
10. **Your questions / discussion**

Understanding Social Media + Communication

- We should want to *understand* both communication and social media before we start to make regulations and rules, or national policies
- **Unhelpful blanket / basic statements:**
 - “Social media is no different than a live microphone”
 - “Only post something that you would feel comfortable seeing as a headline the next day in the local paper”
 - “Texting with young people is how grooming starts”
- **We should want to move beyond the basics**

What is “social media”?

- Broad term – shared content and social networking



- Not texting or email

Internal and External Social Media Use

- **Internal**

- Organization's use of social media
- Strategic purposes
- Conduct of organization's social media representative(s)

- **External**

- Member's use of social media
- Organization's reaction to member's use
- Member conduct issues
- Proactive and Reactive

Engaging with Social Media

- **Where to engage?**
 - What medium to use?
- **When to engage?**
- **Who should engage?**
- **What should be engaged?**
 - What content?
- **Why should we engage?**
- **How should we engage?**
 - What format for our content?

SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY!

Connect social media use to your strategic plan

Random



Intentional



Building a Social Media Strategy

- **Involves:**

1. an Objective (e.g., increase participation)
2. an Audience (e.g., retirees)
3. Media and Tactics (e.g., facebook, twitter)
4. a Strategy (e.g., share lessons for first-timers)
5. Timeline and Results (e.g., 50 new registrants by March)

Social Media Strategy - #1 Objectives

- **What are the organizational objectives?**
- **Depends on type of organization (NSO, PSO, club)**
- **Refer to strategic plan (or create new objectives)**
 - Raise awareness of athletes
 - Promote competitions
 - Educate coaches
 - Develop officials
 - Increase registration
 - Acquire more funding
- **Which objectives can be addressed by social media?**

Social Media Strategy - #2 Audience

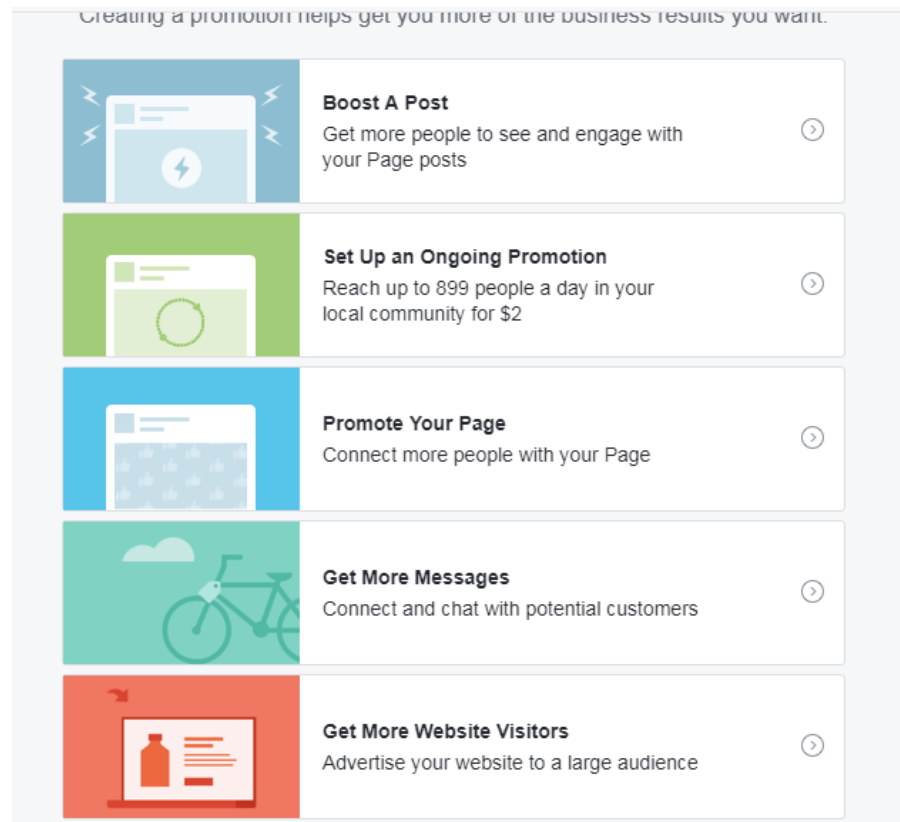
- **Who are the audience(s)? Depends on the objectives!**
 - Young people
 - People interested in boats, sports on the water
 - Athletes in comparable sports (canoe-kayak? dragonboat?)
 - Recreational paddlers / sailors
 - Private sector (sponsors?)
 - Government or other funders
 - Parents
- **Which audience(s) can social media reach?**

Social Media Strategy - #3 Media & Tactics

- **What social medium best reaches the targeted audience(s) to address the identified objective(s)?**
 - Facebook
 - Twitter
 - Instagram
 - YouTube, etc
- **What social media do we have the resources to use, upkeep, and maintain?**
- **What options does each social medium provide?**
 - Paid ads
 - Type of content

Social Media Strategy - #3 Media & Tactics

○ Facebook Promotions



Social Media Strategy - #4 Strategies

- Importance of content
- What can we do? What can't we do?
- What content can/should we share?
 - Meets objectives
 - Shareable content - promoted
 - Defamation / Privacy / Intellectual Property
- Who is sharing content? Who decides the shared content?

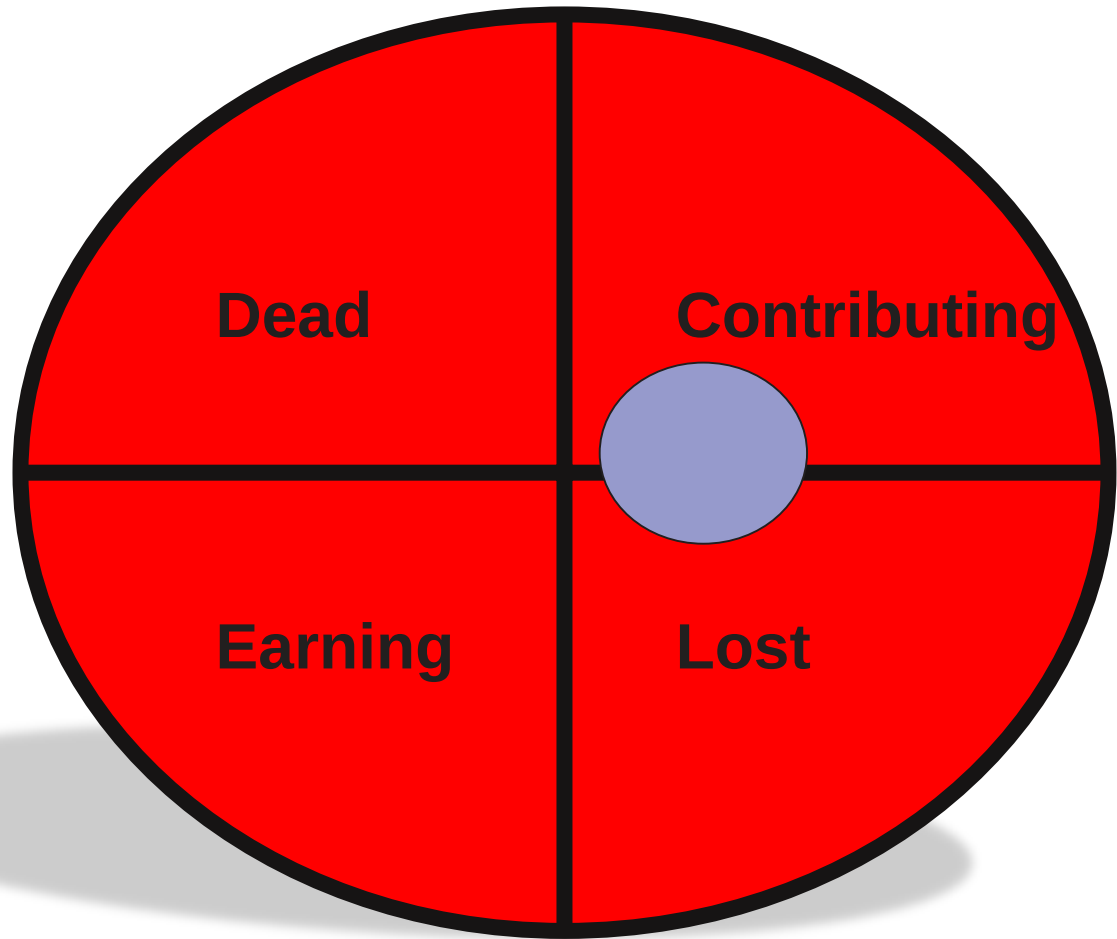
Social Media Strategy - #5 Timeline and Results

- When do we want to achieve the objective?
- How do we know when the objective is achieved?
 - What do results look like?
- Know in advance how to define success (meeting the objective, how and by when)

-
- Questions re: Building Social Media Strategy?
 - Next: Improving Social Media Presence
 - Last: Coach-athlete interaction on social media

An organization's Social Media Presence

No Presence



Risks of Being Lost or Dead

- **Lost**
 - Content not relevant
 - Unfollowed / unfriended
 - No return on time investment
- **Dead**
 - Perception: Does organization still exist?
 - Not dynamic
- **No Presence**
 - Still 'old media' (website, posters, email)
 - OK – as long as this is intentional (still not great)

Five Steps toward Earning

- **#1 - Dedicated Social Media Person**
 - Can be a volunteer
 - Strong communicator
 - Actions reflect on organization
 - Collects content from others and other sources
- **#2 - Multiple-media initiatives**
 - Active social media platforms
 - All should connect to your objectives

Five Steps toward Earning

- **#3 – Goals / Objectives in mind**
 - On message
 - Know role + purpose of each post
 - Buying ads? Know why and for what objective
- **#4 – Freedom to be reflexive (within guidelines)**
 - Empower individual
 - Know the law (defamation/privacy)
 - Follow social media use policy

Five Steps toward Earning

- **#5 – What do results look like?**
 - Types of engagement
 - Active vs. Passive
 - Not the *number* of ‘followers’ or ‘friends’
 - Accomplishing objectives
 - New business
 - Intangible connections to the organization
 - Gains may take a while (think months/years) – sustained activity is necessary

Social Media Use Policy

- **For organization representatives who use organization-branded social media**
 - What should be said? (link to strategy/objectives)
 - How should we say it? (tweets, retweets, hashtags?)
 - What media will we use? (depends on the purpose)
 - Who will use which media? (one person for all?)
 - What oversight is required? (how much supervision?)
 - What shouldn't be said? (controversial topics)

Questions ?

- Questions re: Improving Social Media Presence
- Next: Coach-athlete interaction on Social Media



Communication

- **Coaches must know their athletes to be the best coach**
- *“[There is nothing] more important for coaches than to understand their athletes”* (Vealy, 2005, p. 52).
- *“High levels of closeness (e.g., like, trust, respect) tend to promote exchanges of information, open channels of communication and disclosure”* (Jowett & Poczwardowski, 2007, p. 21).
- *“The perceived dangers of a ‘non-friendship’ coach-athlete relationship is that it would be so cold and formal that coaches would not be able to coach effectively”* (Bergmann Drewe, 2002, p. 178).

Communication

- **How should coaches 'get to know' their athletes?**
 - Co-develop athlete goals
 - Open and available to athletes / honest
 - Regular communication
- **Teenage athletes rarely use email. How would an athlete perceive a coach who insisted on communicating via that medium?**
 - Out of touch
 - Doesn't know me – doesn't care
 - Doesn't understand my needs

Communication Cues

- Facial expression, tone of voice, volume of voice, hand gestures, touch, inflection in speech, eye contact
- We lose these cues in non-face-to-face interactions
- Some are replaced by emojis and CAPITAL LETTERS or other tricks - not the most effective replacement



- “You looked really good out there today”

Hyperpersonal Communication

- Communication issues: role ambiguity + credibility, clarity, and closeness
- **Hyperpersonal Communication**
 - Increased yet indiscriminate social contact between individuals
 - Can achieve levels of closeness or intimacy in online settings that would never be achieved as rapidly, if at all, in face-to-face settings
 - Aided by a reduction in communication cues
- **The *biggest* danger for coach and athlete communication is that it starts to happen hyperpersonally**

Role Ambiguity and Credibility

- “One of the boys”
- *“The coach must remain the coach. He must never reduce the social distance between himself and the boys so that they consider him ‘one of the boys’. It is much more important to the coach that he be respected than liked”* (Lawther, 1951, p. 27).
- **The Challenge for Coaches:**
 - Maintain clear roles and credibility.
 - Get to know athletes to be their best coach.
 - Be open to using social media (this is how athletes communicate).
 - Hyperpersonal communication on social media can reduce social distance between the coach and athlete.
 - Reduction in social distance strains credibility and causes role ambiguity.

Case Study

- **The Changing Role of the Coach**
 - *You occasionally text-message athletes and parents with competition updates and schedule changes. One athlete texts you multiple times a day – confirming competition details, gossiping about other athletes, and asking for advice about personal problems. How do you respond to this athlete?*
- **Remember to consider:**
 1. The athlete would never come to you in person with many of these issues
 2. The role of a coach is more than simply a technique instructor
 3. The frequent text messages are interrupting your personal life

Other Challenges – Athlete conduct

- Coaches viewing illegal or irresponsible conduct by athletes on athlete social media accounts
- Constructive knowledge



Other Challenges – Athlete conduct

- If parents look the other way... can coaches? Should coaches?



Other Challenges – legal issues

- **Defamatory statements**
 - False, malicious remarks (“Treasurer is stealing!”)
- **Private information**
 - Personal information
 - Personal information of minors
- **Pictures of children**
 - Consent required?
 - Photo / video Release Form – use for non-commercial purposes by organization
 - Coach’s personal facebook? Team photo?

Tools for Organizations (and members)

- **Five tools**
 - **Social Media Use Policy** – for the organization's staff and other stakeholders (internal document)
 - **Social Media Guidelines for Athletes** – 'guidelines' not 'policy' (internal document)
 - **Social Media Guidelines for Coaches** – 'guidelines' not 'policy' (internal document)
 - **Social Media Policy** – for coaches and athletes (external document)
 - Updated Code of Conduct or Athlete Agreement

Guidelines for Coaches (examples)

- *Be consistent in your use of Facebook with athletes. If you accept one athlete as your Facebook friend – you must accept all of your athletes*
- *Ensure that parents are aware that some coach-athlete interactions may take place on Facebook, by texting, or by instant messaging*
- *Be aware that you may acquire information about an athlete that imposes an obligation of disclosure on your part (such as seeing pictures of underage athletes drinking during a trip)*
- *Team information should not be distributed on, or limited to, social media*
- ***Consider using TeamSnap!***



Guidelines for Coaches

- **Consider creating a personal social media strategy**
 - What messages do you need to communicate?
 - What messages can be communicated better?
 - What medium can you use to communicate?
 - What are the positives and negatives of each medium?
 - What are your personal guidelines for social media?
 - What are the organization's suggestions?
 - How can you make sure to consistently apply your strategy?

Guidelines for Coaches

You have four options when it comes to interacting with athletes online:

-  Do not friend or follow athletes (or current athletes) on social media.
-  Create distinct social media profiles for your professional career.
-  Friend athletes on your personal accounts with very restricted settings.
-  Friend all athletes on personal accounts.

<https://www.viasport.ca/social-media-toolkit/Social-media-101-for-coaches>

Social Media Policy

- Should remind the individual that behaviour or conduct that occurs on social media is covered under the organization's appropriate policy for behaviour
- Should reference the Guidelines for use that the organization has produced or distributed internally to its members
- Short document

New Language (registration form examples)

- *Some non-personal communication between Coaches and Athletes may take place electronically (e.g., by texting) and this type of communication is now considered to be commonplace, especially with older Athletes (e.g., teenagers). All Individuals are aware that such communication is subject to the Organization's Code of Conduct and Ethics and Social Media Policy.*
- *The Organization is aware that electronic communication between Coaches and Athletes (e.g., texting) is commonplace. The Organization has instructed its Coaches to make electronic communication with Athletes as non-personal as possible. Coaches are advised to be available for Athletes who choose to initiate electronic contact – but also to attempt to move these interactions offline as soon as is appropriate.*

Most Important Points of the Presentation

- 1) An organization's social media activities should intentionally align with the organization's strategic objectives
- 2) Coach-athlete social media communication will occur. Have strategies and guidelines – not restrictions.

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Further Reading

- [Social Media 101 – For Coaches \(Viasport\)](#)
- [Coaches, not just organizations, should have a social media strategy \(Sportlaw\)](#)
- [The proven value of a social media policy \(Sportlaw\)](#)
- [Does your organization need a social media policy? \(Sportlaw\)](#)

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For more information:
www.sportlaw.ca
