

9. Online campaigning

Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Youtube, Instagram, Tumblr, RenRen, Weibo and Vkontakte, are only a few of the social media sites out there. Don't worry, you don't have to use them all to set up a successful online campaign. Pick a few, and set up your own successful social media campaign, either to support your offline work, to inform and increase your supporter base, or as a campaign in its own right.

Social Media

Tweet

Post

Like

Share

Your social media strategy

An effective social media strategy is important and valuable to support and/or lead your advocacy and campaigning. It allows you to inform, engage and inspire your supporters and grow new supporters, without it costing much money. In many parts of the world social media has become very influential. You can use social media for different reasons:

- **Connecting with people** or supporters in both your local and national network and far beyond
- **Engaging in activities together** online such as petitions, letter-writing and sharing photos;
- **Sharing information** including adding to and commenting on published information or circulating information to journalists, policy targets and others

Your social media strategy should support and/or drive your advocacy and campaigning work and must be linked to your overall campaign strategy

Rob Perkins, Action on Armed Violence, London:

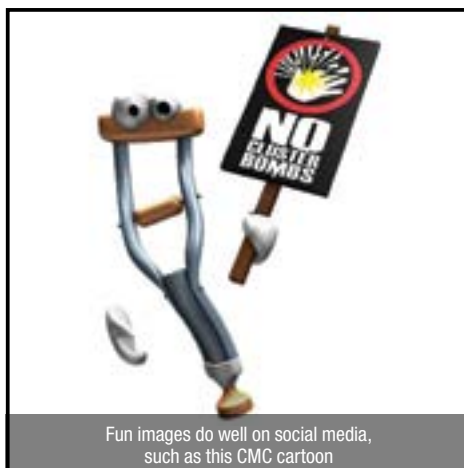
"Twitter is such a simple and effective way to get my message out. I get new followers every time I share a news story I've written or some new findings from our research team, and that helps to build the support for our work."

Sarah Leo, Action on Armed Violence, London:

"Don't be a robot! I find it a lot more interesting to follow people who also reveal a bit of personality rather than just pure professionalism. There should be purpose to every tweet, of course, but a light comment in between could trigger interesting interactions."



© Cambodia Campaign to Ban Landmines



Fun images do well on social media, such as this CMC cartoon



Celebrating the fifth anniversary of the CCM
© Gustavo Vieira

Some of your social media options

1. Facebook (www.facebook.com)

What it is: Facebook is the most popular social media network in the world today with over 800 million active users all around the world. You can use Facebook as an individual or as an organisation to connect with others you know or who care about similar things. Many non-profit organisations have a Facebook “page”, used as a way of raising awareness and generating action on different issues with a broad and diverse group of people. You can post almost anything on Facebook such as “what is on your mind” status updates, links, and pictures.

Alex Hiniker, PAX, New York:

“Actively engage with other likeminded accounts by retweeting their messages, responding to their points, and mentioning them in tweets you think they might find interesting. But don’t annoy people by spamming with the same or similar messages over and over again. At a very minimum, they will find your content repetitive and uninteresting and unfollow you. If you are especially annoying, they may even block you.”

Tips for using Facebook for advocacy:

- There are two different types of Facebook pages, one for individuals and one for organisations. To create an organisation page you need to have (or create) an individual Facebook account first. From your individual account you can choose “Create a page”. A “page” is useful because it can be administered by several people at the same time and has a more professional look. It is also easier for people you don’t know to “like” an organisation’s page.
- Do your best to make what you post “likeable” or “shareable”! Try to find inspirational stories, examples of courage, etc. – something that would move someone to hit the “like” or “share” button. If you write only negative things, it will discourage your supporters.
- Mix it up by attaching links to your website, news articles, your partners’ websites, action alerts, photos, and more.
- Photographs and videos are very popular on Facebook - use them!
- On Facebook, the shorter the text in the posting, the better!
- Don’t forget to ‘Like’ the Cluster Muniton Coalition on Facebook (www.facebook.com/banclusterbombs) and connect with other Cluster Muniton Coalition campaigners worldwide. It’s great for getting ideas for campaign actions, and for easily keeping in touch with others.



2. Twitter (www.twitter.com)

What it is: Twitter is a social media network that allows users to send short messages (140 characters maximum) onto Twitter generally or directly to other users. There are two main activities you can do on Twitter: 1) view and send messages via tweeting, retweeting and sending private messages and 2) build your contact list and network by “following” and engaging with other Twitter users. Twitter is a great tool for making announcements of events, breaking news or action alerts. It is also good for engaging with journalists and for getting the latest information - often breaking news will appear on Twitter slightly before it appears on news wires.

Combining the strength of Facebook and Twitter in a ‘Thunderclap’

In 2013 the ‘[Stop Explosive Investments](#)’ campaign used Thunderclap to send one message to the world hundreds of times. The message directed to the Danish government, called on the country to introduce legislation prohibiting financial investments in companies that produce cluster munitions.

Thunderclap is a petition platform that, when enough people sign up to it via Facebook, Twitter or Tumblr, sends out that one message from each individual’s Facebook, Twitter or Tumblr page at the same time. The clever bit is that supporters don’t all have to sit behind their computer at the same time for it – the Thunderclap website does it for them, as long as enough supporters sign up prior to the deadline.

It is a great tool to get a huge social reach. Do you think you can find 100 people to support your cause? (www.thunderclap.it)

Tips for using Twitter for advocacy:

- Intersperse your own tweets with retweets (RT) of others you are following. This helps to form relationships and connections with new networks and to support like-minded users to get the message out.
- Make tweets personable and friendly – even though you might be tweeting from your organisation’s account, everyone knows it is not a robot.
- Use hashtags (#) in front of key words to help people find the topic you are talking about (e.g. #clusterbombs, #clustermunitions, #Syria) If there is a major event, for example, do your best to find out what hashtags are being used and then include them in your tweets.
- Direct your tweets by using a twitter ‘handle’ (@) if you want a particular person/organisation to read your tweet (e.g. @banclusterbombs).
- Use Tweetdeck to filter tweets, so you can easily follow those tweets that mention certain topics (<https://tweetdeck.twitter.com/>).
- At least once a week, go through your new followers and see if you need to “follow” them too.
- A tweet is easily sent and easily seen by a lot of people, therefore think twice before you tweet, particularly if it regards something (potentially) sensitive.
- Consider live tweeting during an event to create a sense of action, and to involve those not attending. During treaty meetings @banclusterbombs and Cluster Munition Coalition campaigners tweet to get proceedings out of the conference venue and into the world.
- Follow those you want to influence – many politicians, journalists and influential organisations are now on Twitter. Sometimes it’s difficult to find the real account for high profile figures - look for the ‘blue tick’ to make sure. Don’t forget to follow the Cluster Munition Coalition (@banclusterbombs). You can create ‘lists’ in Twitter to help you manage your contacts.
- Use Bitly (<http://www.bitly.com>) to shorten website links, and Citebite (<http://www.citebite.com>) to shortcut to selected quotes on a website – this means you can fit more into your 140 character tweets.

3. YouTube (www.youtube.com)

What it is: YouTube is a video-sharing site where you can share video clips or whole films that you or others have made. YouTube videos can be made professionally or with mobile or pocket video cameras.

Sending your targets a YouTube link is a lot easier than emailing big files, and you can also share links via Facebook and Twitter.

Tips for using Twitter for advocacy:

- Be you, be different. Your YouTube profile should reflect your organisation's sensibility, so think of posting content that is keeping in line with who you are - YouTube users appreciate authenticity
- Find someone with the technical skills and tools to help you create a professional looking video
- Create a great call-out video to attract attention to your issue. The call-to-action video is your most important piece of media – you don't get a second chance to make a first impression. The video should be concise, interesting and with a clear message or call
- Testimonials from people that are affected by your campaign issue are powerful, as are messages from influential supporters
- You can embed YouTube videos onto your website fairly easily – share your own clips and Cluster Muniton Coalition films this way. You can find Cluster Muniton Coalition films at <http://www.youtube.com/user/CMCInternational>.

Alex Hiniker, PAX, New York:

"When engaging in online discussions, compose your message, count to 10, and then reread it. Don't respond in the heat of the moment and post a message you will regret."

Hector Guerra, ICBL-CMC campaigner, Mexico:

"Online campaigning could easily be overestimated. In itself, it is not enough."

4 Sharing photos through Flickr (www.flickr.com) or Instagram (www.instagram.com)

What it is: Flickr and Instagram are free online photo-sharing networks that allow you to provide other people with a glimpse into your campaign. They say a picture is worth a thousand words, and using them in your advocacy and campaign activities can really be an asset. Flickr can also become the place you store and search for photos to use on your other social media.

Tips for using photos on social media for your campaign:

- Take a camera with you everywhere and document what you, your organisation or partners are doing. At an event, take a photo. Giving an interview? Ask someone else to take a photo of you while being interviewed. Having a staff meeting? Photograph it. You would be amazed at how much people love seeing behind-the-scenes photos of what is happening with your organisation.
- Ask other people to upload photos relevant to your issue. On Flickr, you can set up a group around a particular theme or issue. It's pretty simple and allows supporters to upload their own photos. Then, when you have events around the country, ask people to submit them to the group and you can highlight them on your own site. When you ask people to participate, they're going to feel more attached to your issue and likely take more action.
- Be creative. Conduct campaign actions asking people to find and take photos of a theme and post them online. You could ask people to hold message boards, or find another way to get your key messages across.
- Images of people that are affected by cluster munitions and UXO are powerful - it might be a survivor, a family living in contaminated region, or those employed in clearing land. You'll need to get consent from the people on the photos to use images, especially of children. Try to keep a good record of the permission granted, and context an image can be used. If you are using another photographer's images, be sure to credit them clearly.
- Create a media set of photographs that you can easily share with journalists. You can use your own and some of the photos from the Cluster Muniton Coalition collection (www.flickr.com/clustermunitoncoalition/sets).

5. Blogs

What it is: A blog is a website where items are posted on a regular basis, usually of a more informal nature, and often in the form of various posts by individuals. A blog can include text, video, images and links. Blogs use a conversational style and often focus on a particular “area of interest”.

There are several blogging platforms, available such as WordPress (www.wordpress.org), Tumblr (www.tumblr.com) and Blogger (www.blogger.com), that enable anyone (including those with little technical skills) to set up a blog. There are many features that allow readers to interact with the blogger, such as sharing or liking posts, commenting on posts, and user subscriptions.

Blogging platforms can also serve as a cheap method to create a website for your organisation or campaign. Tumblr is especially good for this, and there are lots of free or low cost templates (also known as ‘themes’) that you can use to make your website look professional.

Tips for using blogs for advocacy:

- Decide what you will write about on your blog. What is your area of expertise or experience that people would find compelling? What keywords should you use in your blog to help people who would be interested in your cause to find you?
- Get personal – show the personality and values of yourself or the organisation. Decide if the blog is a personal blog (from an individual) or if you will have a number of regular or guest authors to create a variety of voices.
- Post regularly, but make sure what you have to say is interesting and compelling. Relate your posts to your cause or the actions you want people to take, and explain why.
- Vary the content that you post on your blog, such as journal entries, videos, photos, or links to other news with a comment from you.
- Search for other bloggers with similar interests. Follow them, comment on their blog posts linking back to yours, or ask them to team up with you on an action.

Other popular social media networks:

There are countless social media networks. So many that we don’t have the space to highlight every single one in this chapter. But it is good to realise that popularity of social media networks differ in each country or region. Ask the people around you which social media networks they are using, to find out which other network(s) you might want to start using too. Some examples:

- RenRen (‘China’s Facebook’) - <http://www.renren.com/> and Weibo (Chinese language Twitter equivalent) <http://weibo.com/>
- VKontakte – Russian language social media network similar to Facebook - <http://vk.com/>
- www.cloob.com (Persian-language social media page, mostly popular in Iran)
- And also: Reddit, LinkedIn, Yammer, Badoo, Pinterest, Quora, Google+, Viadeo, Orkut, Odnoklassiki (Russian only), Myspace...

Alex Hiniker, PAX, New York:

“If you are tweeting on behalf of a campaign or group, be strategic about your content. Plan your tweets ahead of time, and make sure you tweet at a time when you know your target audience will be online. There are free programs available for you to program tweets ahead of time if you will be offline.”

Erin Hunt, Mines Action Canada:

“The various platforms all have their own tone and method of communicating. For example, Facebook allows you to share slightly longer posts and more information while Twitter lends itself to short updates and links.”

Making the most of your social media strategy

- **Keep it short:** Writing concisely is an important skill for campaigners, especially on social media. To get your message across, you have to say it well and short. Don't fight the character counts – use them to inspire better, clearer writing! If you need to shorten a weblink to include in your post use link-shortening services, like bitly.com.
- **Post and engage with your supporters often:** Remember social media is a conversation and it's important to talk! Post often and grow your network by engaging with other like-minded people or groups in the conversation, such as other Cluster Munition Coalition national campaigns, donors and related organisations.
- **Use Storify** to bring together posts from different social media networks in one place, such as was done to document links relating to use of cluster munitions in Syria in 2012 (<http://storify.com/banclusterbombs/syria-s-cluster-bomb-use>)
- **Keep it in perspective** – social media can take up as little or as much time as you give it – but it can be tempting to spend a lot of time on it! Regularly monitor and evaluate your use of social media and reflect which activity is having the most impact.

Erin Hunt, Mines Action Canada:

“You can use social media to both inform your current supporters and to reach out to new supporters or to decision makers and media outlets. Including photos will help your posts stand out.”

Safety and security

- It is advisable to set up a separate email address which you use to sign up to your social media pages. You should use this email address for social media only and ensure you keep your work and private email separate.
- Keep good passwords. Passwords protect your computer and social media presence so that no one can access them without your consent. Good passwords are made up of six to 12 alpha-numeric characters (a combination of letters, numbers and symbols). Do not use passwords based on information that people know about you (like key campaign words, your birthday, the name of your pet or your mother's name), and change them regularly.
- Always log off social media sites when you are done using it, particularly when you are using a public computer.
- Keep your computer virus-free by installing an anti-virus programme and scan your computer regularly to detect viruses.
- Anytime you use a shared or public computer (like at an internet café), always go into the “history” section of the internet browser and clear the history when you are done.
- If you think you are at risk of compromising your personal safety by online campaigning then it is best not to do it!

More resources:

- [CMC Facebook page](#)
- [CMC Twitter page](#)
- CMC's [image](#) and [video](#) library
- [Building a Campaign Strategy](#)
- [Crafting Your Message](#)
- Tactical Technology Collective's [10 Remixed Tactics](#), ideas for shaking up your online activism
- [We are CMC](#) – example of a Tumblr page

