

Social Media

Love it or hate it social media is here to stay: you will need to think about it and work out how it could be important to your organisation.

Right near the top of the last couple of surveys we have carried out about what support you need is Social Media. We get numerous questions about how groups should use it and how to set up sites. We are dedicating a bit of this newsletter to pointing you in the direction of where you can find out more. This information is designed to get you started; it will not answer all your questions. Watch out for upcoming workshops on starting to use social media.

So what's all the fuss about – check out [this video](#) to get some idea of the size and impact of social media. I am sure not all the facts are true but this has been watched by over half a million people and there are hundreds of almost identical ones out there so there is probably some truth in it.

Why not check out this [video](#) about how charities can use social media. Some of the information is a bit old but you can see where they got the figures from and also follow links to related articles.

The bottom line is that social media is having a massive impact on how people communicate and keep in touch. It is foolish to think that just because you are not interested then the people you work with or who support you will not be interested either.

There are numerous guides to using social media available in all formats, here are some that I have found.

- Some people at Bournemouth University have come up with a guide [here](#)
- Ideal ware (an American organisation) have a guide and workbook you can [download](#)
- Charitycomms have no end of useful information on their website including some great [guides](#)
- I found this randomly from the [Institute of philanthropy](#)

To be fair there are numerous guides etc out there on the web, some you will connect with and some you won't. It is worth doing your own searches to find something that suits you.

Check out these YouTube searches [Social media for non-profits](#) or [Social media for charities](#) for some videos that might inspire you, or send you to sleep.

I am a firm believer that social media can be useful to many organisations, however it is important to take some of the claims made with a pinch of salt. As with any new policy or project it is important to think about how it fits with your activities and mission and to plan how you will approach it. There is nothing worse than a Facebook page that is never updated or a Twitter account that was last used a year ago.

Remember that social media:

- is not a panacea for your fundraising or engagement issues. It is one tool to

assist part of your work.

- takes time – someone needs to have the time to regularly update content.
- is a conversation. You may end up with a difficult topic or with someone with different views to you. Think about how you might react to this.
- is sociable; it is about stories and people. Do not simply use it to sell stuff.
- is public. Think about what you say. It can [come back and bite you](#) if you are not careful.
- can have dramatic consequence and unexpected benefits. (See [this story](#) about Martha Payne's NeverSeconds blog that has now raised over £130,000 on [Just Giving](#)

Social Media in Action - Follow Headway Cambridgeshire on Twitter and Facebook

Twitter and Facebook have brought a new dimension to Headway's work and are becoming increasingly important in the way it gets its message across. Kate Ward at Headway is enthusiastic about social media and the benefits it can bring to the organisation's work, its profile and its contacts.

But, using social media successfully requires time and effort. Kate tweets several times a day and uses twitter to:

- give information
- highlight issues
- make new contacts (both individuals and organisations)
- to sustain working relationships with other groups.

Other Headway staff are also encouraged to tweet about their work (events they are involved in or client sessions) to encourage a wider input and more varied range of messages.

Headway constantly analyses its statistics to see who is following, who is re-tweeting and to identify new followers who are always sent a welcome message. It is also important to block people whose comments could be damaging to Headway's reputation. Using twitter to make links with other organisations has been a way of extending Headway's contacts and of developing new working relationships.

Learning how to tweet is vital. Tweets must be short and simple but able to convey a message or tell a simple story. Kate's advice is to follow others to see who else is successful and why.

Follow Headway: https://twitter.com/Headway_Camb

[Headway's facebook](#) page enables staff, clients, families and volunteers to raise issues, exchange information and stay in touch.

May 2013