

Social Media 101: A Guide to Creating Your Online Presence

By Jenna Green (State Arts Office) with Angelica Armstrong (StrongRapport)

In the time of COVID-19, social media quickly became a vital tool for fundraising efforts and hosting virtual events. A strong online presence was, and is, more important than ever. However, navigating that presence can be tricky. I spoke with Angelica Armstrong, social media expert and owner of StrongRapport LLC, to get her suggestions on how an organization can jumpstart their online presence. She says the number one mistake organizations make regarding social media is giving up too early. Sometimes content can feel repetitive or disconnected and many organizations struggle with what to post. Below are her 5 C's of Cultivation and the 5 Things to Keep in Mind that will help with that.

Creating Content: The 5 C's of Cultivation

1. Conversation: Look to the mission statement to identify the three content areas or "pillars" essential to the organization. Use open-ended questions to seek feedback on these pillars.

2. Community: Be sure to use highly sharable content. Everything shared doesn't have to be original. Articles, memes, and photos from relevant outside sources are all great content.

3. Credibility: Build authority and show the audience why this organization is a trusted voice in the arts. Success stories, tips on applying for grant programs, or information on how to have artwork considered for a permanent collection or gallery shows all build the organization's credibility.

4. Connection: Humanize the organization. Tell the audience why the organization does what it does. If there isn't strong content in this area, try interviewing people inside the organization. Ask why they like working there and what the organization's mission means to them.

5. Conversions: Making the ask (donations, sales, event participation). Don't bury it in content. Make sure the ask is in the first part of the social media post. Making the ask can be awkward but following the 5 Cs helps create content to justify it.

Posting Content: The 5 Things to Keep in Mind

1. Consistency is King and Content is Queen: Consistently posting content is the most important thing an organization can do to build a social media presence. Commit to posting two times a day, five days a week. Make sure to phrase the content in a way that brings value to the audience, not just the organization. Be sure to show the benefit of participating in the event, visiting the facility, or viewing the content.

2. Know Your Audience: If the organization has less than 500 followers, assume it does not yet have an audience. Imagine the ideal patron and tailor all content to that person. Where do they eat? Shop? Get their news? What magazines do they read? Where do they go on vacation? What content will interest them?

3. Engage: Social media relationships should be a two-way street. Respond to all comments and thank the audience for sharing the organization's content. Share relevant content from artists and other arts groups that follow the organization. Regular engagement with the audience encourages more shares and new followers.

4. Try New Things: Social media platforms are constantly changing. Live video content is the most popular right now. It doesn't take a professional to create a video – use a smart phone and give it a try!

5. Tracking Tells: Use the basic demographic information provided by social media platforms to learn about the audience. Find out who is clicking the links and sharing the organization's content and use this information to inform future posts.

Creating an organization's social media presence can be intimidating but following this guide will help get it started. Angelica recommends an organization consistently follow these recommendations for 100 days to see results. The most important thing to keep in mind is to try. Trying something beats doing nothing. Always!

This is the first of a multi-part series on social media tools. Look for our next installment with Angelica in the Summer 2021 issue.



Angelica Armstrong is the owner and CEO of StrongRapport LLC, a marketing, web design, graphic design, and video production company. Her company's services focus on women-owned small businesses and artists. Originally from Cleveland, Ohio, she's now a proud West Virginian living in Charleston. In her spare time, she loves to spend time with her fiancé, dog, cat, and houseplants.