

How to choose the right social media platform for a small arts organisation

As the online world moves increasingly to mobile browsing, and marketing goes digital, a social media presence has become a must for organisations wishing to stay connected and relevant. While this emphasis on new technology can be overwhelming, your social media experience doesn't need to be! Here are a few tips to help you get the most out of the big social platforms.

Keep it simple

You don't need to have a presence on every platform available – that spreads your time and your audience too thin. You will only need one or two (at most) accounts. But how do you decide which one?

What do you want to show people?

Ask yourself what you want to use social media for in the first place. Do you want to show people your artwork or share links to articles? Do you want to contribute in real time to popular conversations and send out daily updates?

If you want to share great photos and pieces of art, Instagram is perfect for you. Instagram is entirely image-based, with the ability to add descriptions and hashtags to help other users find what you're sharing.

Twitter is ideal for real time updates and contributions to large scale discussions, as well as sharing and commenting on links. Content on Twitter moves quickly, so it's best for organisations that have the capacity to update and respond often.

Facebook should be your medium of choice if your work involves video (because of its integration with YouTube) or, alternately, if you anticipate having fewer and less frequent updates.

Of course these aren't the only ways to use these mediums – there are interesting and inventive ways to use them all – and it's best to explore them yourself to discover what will work best for your organisation.

Who is your audience?

We know that Twitter, and especially Instagram, are more popular among younger audiences, while older users prefer Facebook. It might be worthwhile to ask around your networks, members and peers and find out what platforms they prefer, and if they have suggestions for how they'd like to see it used. If in doubt, Facebook is arguably the most universal and the simplest.

Develop a style guide and stick to it

Social media is sometimes considered an informal medium, and while it is best to speak in your authentic voice, maintaining a coherent style and professionalism is important for organisations. Rules of grammar and formatting still apply – watch out for sentence fragments or text that doesn't make sense, and keep the punctuation simple. Be sure that the tone is appropriate – for instance, a professional organisation should not use multiple exclamation marks or unnecessary capital letters for emphasis – and be consistent, especially when multiple people are using the one account.

Plan ahead

With so much else to do, the task of updating your social media accounts can often fall to the bottom of the list. Maintaining your social presence should not take up all your time, but you'll get the best results if you factor it into your daily or weekly schedule. Spending a little time regularly will help you to best stay in touch with, and to grow, your audience.

Make sure it's really for you

Social media is social – conversations need to be maintained, tracked and responded to more often and more regularly than you would, for example, update a website. Make sure that you have the time and the resources first, and a genuine interest in using the platform to its potential!