

Social Media Pros and Cons

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Levels of Engagement

Observation, Interaction, Contribution, Solicitation

Considerations for Social Media Outreach

Cost, Time, Blowback, Monitoring/Filtering

The Tools:

Email Lists/Email Discussion Groups

Pro: Simple; easy to use; widespread adoption

Con: Relatively limited interaction; archiving issues; deliverability issues

Blogs

Pro: Can help to raise the profile of ideas or organizations; a natural for policy- or personality-driven organizations

Con: Requires constant updating; usually requires outreach to get noticed

Video

Pro: Cheap and relatively easy to produce; can reach large audience through video-sharing sites; often evokes an emotional response

Con: With tens of thousands of new online video clips going up daily, cutting through the clutter can be a real challenge

Social Networking

Pro: Can reach large numbers of supporters where they spend time online; supporters can spread your message for you

Con: Time-consuming; relatively low rate of conversion of "friends" into activists; more of a one-to-one than a one-to-many medium

User-Generated Content

Pro: Gives access to talent outside the organization; can yield high quality words, video and images

Con: Must have critical mass of participants; danger of people going off the reservation; quality will vary immensely

Viral Marketing

Pro: Other people spread your message for you

Con: Almost impossible to plan for or to predict, though simple tools and tactics can help