



## Leveraging social media for early childhood initiatives

Social media can be a powerful tool in your communications toolbox to inspire, inform and collaborate with your target audiences. In addition to the platforms you know well (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn), new ones are constantly being developed. There are best practices and guidelines common to all social media platforms that will increase the success of your efforts. Social media may not be right for your particular goals, so it's important to assess how to use it effectively. The chart below highlights common platforms and how you can use them strategically.

Objective	Recommended Platforms	Social Media Strategy	Best Practices
<b>Share knowledge that positions you or your organization as an expert.</b>	Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Wordpress, Blog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publish articles or share resources.</li> <li>Engage in conversations to grow followers, advance your message and be viewed as an expert.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reply to comments and answer questions to invite connections and deepen the conversation around early childhood.</li> </ul>
<b>Grow supporters.</b>	Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, Wordpress, Blog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have an ongoing presence as a resource.</li> <li>Consistently post information that is relevant to your followers.</li> <li>Follow individuals or organizations and share their content.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stay on message.</li> <li>Tag organizations and individuals.</li> <li>Reply to positive comments and answer questions to invite connections and deepen the conversation.</li> </ul>
<b>Tell a story and share successes through photos, video, audio, infographics or other content.</b>	Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include photos or videos alongside posts when possible.</li> <li>Share success stories about your initiative.</li> <li>Recognize and thank champions and team members.</li> <li>Link to content (blogs, videos, photos) from your website.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stay positive and on message.</li> <li>Share visuals that relate to your initiatives.</li> <li>Ensure your content is edited and has clear visual and audio quality.</li> </ul>
<b>Cultivate champions.</b>	Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share pictures, news and events.</li> <li>Follow individuals and organizations you are seeking to engage with.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tag appropriate individuals and organizations.</li> <li>Used recognized hashtags to increase message reach.</li> <li>Share posts from other individuals or organizations to cultivate connections.</li> </ul>

### Common Social Media Platforms



**Facebook**  
Social networking site used by 68% of U.S. adults. Users share content with family and friends, and connect with brands and organizations.



**Twitter**  
News and social networking site used by 326 million people monthly. Users post short messages ("tweets"), photos and videos. Hashtags indicate topics and trends.



**LinkedIn**  
Social networking site designed for the business community, with 590 million users. Members share news, visual content and long-form articles.



**YouTube**  
Video sharing site that allows users to upload, view, share and comment on videos. Used by 73% of U.S. adults.



**Instagram**  
Mobile photo and video sharing site. Typically attracts a younger audience, with 72% of teens using the platform.



**Wordpress**  
Content management system that allows users to easily create and update a blog. Used as a tool for nearly 26% of all websites.



## 6 social media best practices to elevate your communication efforts

### 1) Set social media goals

Decide what objectives you want to achieve with your social media strategy. Goals should be attainable and measurable, and will influence everything from the platforms you use to the content you produce.

#### Sample goals

- Increase awareness of your organization, business or initiative.
- Engage and educate local families.
- Gain new customers.
- Drive public conversation.

### 2) Create and curate engaging content

Tell stories and share information relevant to your target audiences through photos, videos, infographics and curated content. It is also important to stay on message and post consistently — 41% of social users say they unfollow pages that share too much irrelevant content.

### 3) Take advantage of analytics

Your social media strategy should be data-driven. While “likes” and followers are nice to have, they mean little if they don’t result in meaningful engagement. Dive a little deeper to understand who your audience is and how they interact with your content. Many platforms offer robust, built-in analytics dashboards.

#### Metrics to keep an eye on

- **Reach** | The number of unique users who saw your post. How far is your content spreading?
- **Clicks** | The number of clicks on your content, logo or website. What connects with your audience?
- **Sentiment** | How users react to your content or brand. What are people saying about you?

### 4) Use social media interactively

Social media should be “social,” right? Instead of just pushing out information, engage in authentic, two-way conversations. Create a community that fosters connection and information-sharing. Follow organizations and individuals you want to connect with, and interact with their content. Tag people and groups, and use hashtags to extend the reach of your messaging.

### 5) Consider paid promotion

Many organizations start out using organic methods to boost their social presence. If organic is no longer helping you reach your desired impressions or engagements, consider paid promotion. Paid social media campaigns, such as sponsored Facebook posts, can be customized based on a variety of factors, such as target audience, campaign duration and budget. Paid social can be a cost-effective way to get your message heard.

### 6) Take advantage of tools

Social management tools, such as Hootsuite and Sendible, or a simple spreadsheet, help you plan out your content and posting schedule. Many tools also include publishing, bulk scheduling and analytics tracking.