Promote Your Fundraising Event with Social Media
Whether you are a social media expert, just getting started, or don’t know where to begin, using social media is a natural fit for promoting your fundraising event.

If you are new at this, the world of social media may seem vast and overwhelming, but experts recommend getting your feet wet with a small, discrete project, and we think that a fundraising event fits the bill perfectly! With that in mind, here is an overview of best practices around social media, along with steps you can take to promote your fundraising event, with a particular focus on two of the most popular social media platforms, Facebook and Twitter.

This ebook covers the following:

- Getting Started
- What to Post About
- Tell Your Story
- Integrate and Cross-pollinate
- Facebook Features and Twitter Tips

Who are we?
BiddingForGood has helped schools and nonprofits like yours raise over $120 million with online auction fundraisers. Our customers earn an average of $6 for every dollar they invest, because we provide a complete suite of tools designed to help you expand your audience, get more auction items, and raise more money. We have run over 12,000 online auctions and collaborate with customers every day to help them promote their events effectively and efficiently. More schools and nonprofit organizations are moving to online fundraising auctions for one reason: they work!
Getting Started

What to do and when? At first glance, there’s a lot to tackle, but if you set appropriate goals and keep your timeline top of mind, you can look back after your event is over and see measurable results from your efforts.

1. **Start small** - you don’t have to master Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, and every other social media platform out there at once. Spend some time thinking about what you’re hoping to accomplish and pick one or two tools to start with. Social media is not about a specific technology; it’s about conversation and engagement. Whatever will help you meet your goals is the appropriate platform.

2. **Establish clear goals** - it sounds obvious, but setting clear goals will allow you to focus your energy, use your time more efficiently, and clarify your message. How much are you hoping to raise? What are the funds going towards? These questions also impact the storytelling aspect of your social media adventures, which we will cover later. Are you also trying to expand your community of supporters? If so, by how much?

3. **Have fun** - let your personality shine through! Whoever is tasked with promoting your event via social media should be someone who conveys spirit and enthusiasm for your cause.
What to Post About

One of the most frequent questions people ask when beginning social media efforts is, "What should I post about?" Well, lucky you; you have an event that you're planning, which gives you a ready-made source of ideas and content! You want to promote your fundraiser, of course, and with increasing frequency as your event date draws near.

However, the main focus of your efforts should be on keeping your fans and followers engaged, and there are only so many times you can repeat the same announcement about your event. Here are some ways to mix it up a little:

- Tell background stories about the event: for example, how it came to be; who the event is honoring (if applicable) and why.
- Quantify your fundraising goal and tell your supporters what the money will be used for.
- Recognize event sponsors or donors.
- Keep followers posted on your progress.
- Ask your fans and followers thoughtful questions.
- Include testimonials from people that your organization has helped or from attendees of past events.
- Photos and videos: “behind the scenes” as you prepare for the event, and from the event itself.
- If your event is an auction, highlight some of the items you’re offering, with shout-outs to the item donors.
- Link to relevant content on your website or blog posts.

A sampling of how our clients use pictures to connect with supporters
Tell Your Story

The most effective way to connect with your supporters via social media is to tell your story. How does your organization help? Who do you help? People respond to real stories about real people much more easily than to dry facts or statistics. Telling stories is a powerful way to deliver your message in a compelling way and to get people to rally behind your cause.

Your stories can:

• Make your work tangible and memorable, by adding a human element to your message.
• Enable an emotional connection between supporters and your organization.
• Make it easier to engage your community.
• Help you to get your message across without sounding self-promotional, which is a “no-no” in social media.

Most important, your stories are unique to your organization - no one else delivers the services that you deliver, to your community, the way that you do.

And, by telling your story via social media, you’re not limited to words alone - use pictures, video, interviews, and more!

Which of these would you respond to?

Ferrets-in-Need
Ferrets-in-Need provides services to retired circus ferrets throughout California. We provide assistance to these beloved Mustelidae after they are relieved of their performing duties and would otherwise be left homeless and without veterinary insurance.

Meet Dolly
Dolly is a retired circus ferret. After putting in many years performing to the delight of small children, Dolly was forced into retirement after catching distemper from a colleague, a dancing Chihuahua.

You can help Dolly by donating to Ferrets-in-Need, the only dedicated service provider to retired circus ferrets. For just $10 a month, your donation will provide a cage full of cedar shavings and veterinary care for Dolly, so she can live out the rest of her days in ferret peace.

Well, maybe neither one, since it’s about a retired circus ferret, but you get the point.

Tips for telling a tangible story about your event

• How and whom does your organization help?
• How much are you hoping to raise?
• What will the money you raise be used for?
• Don’t be shy, quantify!

“We’ll be able to provide 6,000 meals to those in need.”

“Meeting our goal will help us provide hospice care to an additional 20 cancer patients and their families.”

“The $30,000 we raise will pay for a new floor for our gymnasium, which was damaged in a flood.”

“The funds we raise will keep our music program going for another year.”
Integrate and Cross-pollinate

What does "cross-pollinate" mean in the context of social media? You want to deliver a consistent message across all platforms, while using your time efficiently and working with the resources that you have. And, you want to encourage your supporters to connect with you by their preferred method. By repurposing your content from one platform to another, and making sure your supporters are aware of every way in which they can connect with you, you can extend your reach and streamline your workload. You can, for example:

- Link to blog posts on your Facebook page.
- Encourage your e-newsletter subscribers to follow you on Facebook and Twitter.
- Ask your Twitter followers to sign up for your e-newsletter.
- Ask your Facebook fans thoughtful questions and package their responses into blog posts.
- Most important - use your existing resources - website, email signatures, e-newsletters, blog - to make your supporters aware that they can connect with you in multiple ways.

Cross-pollination in action

An NPR article...

...is referenced in an email

...which asks for feedback on Facebook

With regard to the NPR story, the one point with which I disagree is the comment regarding bidders: "Clearly what this does and will do is widen the gap between the haves and the have-nots." What we LOVE about BFG is that we're not relying solely on our local school community to bid and buy - bidders nationwide have access to a wide range of items of varying value. We've had a great experience with our auctions :)

May 13 at 11:32am • Like • Comment
Facebook and Twitter are effective platforms for schools and nonprofits to use for promoting their causes and events. With over 500 million and 16 million Facebook and Twitter users respectively, you need to have a presence on these sites if you want to meet your supporters where they are. Here are some tips for promoting your cause on both.

**General Tips**

- As with any form of communication, be selective with your posts. If you post too often, you run the risk of alienating your fans. Of course, if your fans find your posts engaging and valuable, they will clamor for more!
- Talk back! Be sure to respond to comments and questions posted on your Facebook page or Twitter feed.
- Announce your upcoming event on Facebook and Twitter, to generate buzz. Keep at it in the days and weeks leading up to your event.
- Keep your supporters informed of your progress toward your goals - help them stay invested in your success!
- If your event is an auction, you have a ready-made supply of content: post about hot or newly-added auction items, thank your donors and sponsors, count down to your event, and more.

**Facebook**

**Use the Events feature**

- Add your fundraiser as an event on your Facebook page.
- Make your event public, so anyone can rsvp and invite friends.
- Ask your fans to help you by posting a link to your event on their pages - network effects in action!

**Status tagging – use the magical "@" tag**

- You can use @ tags in your posts to have relevant updates appear simultaneously on other fan or profile pages that you’re connected to, thereby exposing your message to more people.
- For example, if your event is an auction and you’re offering NBA tickets to the big game, become fan of your local team’s Facebook page, create a post, and use the @ tag to have it appear on your team’s fan page, provided their page allows external posts.
- Be selective with status tagging and be sure you’re sharing valuable content, so as not to look like you’re spamming other pages.

**Twitter**

- Keep it brief - Twitter’s famous 140-character limit per post forces you to be creative!
- When posting messages containing links, use a link-shortening service such as owl or bit.ly, to avoid exceeding the character limit.
- Create and use consistent “hashtags” in your tweets. Hash (#) signs mark a word as a keyword, and make it easy to search and group popular topics on Twitter (examples: #fundraiser, #greatcause, #animalrescue).
- Ask your followers to help you by retweeting news of your event - and thank them when they do!
- Avoid sending unsolicited "[@username]" messages to drum up interest. These are unsolicited, direct messages to other Twitter users and could be perceived as spam.
- Keep the tone of your tweets light and personal.

**Facebook Events and the power of suggestion**

- Create an Event
- What are you planning?
- Where?
- When?
- Add event

**Auction**

- Auction Item
- Auction Winner
- Auction Details
- Auction Ends

**Create Event**

- Select event
- Show the guest list on the event page
- Non-admit can see the wall
- Create Event
To conclude...

We hope you found this ebook useful, and thank you for taking the time to learn more about promoting your fundraising event with social media.

If you would like to learn more about BiddingForGood and online auctions, please connect with us:

- Call 1-866-918-0313
- Visit us at www.biddingforgood.com
- Become a fan on Facebook
- Follow us on Twitter
- Build a sample auction with our edemo