



Online Media Guide For Non-Profits

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Chapter 1: Planning

Introduction

In this chapter, we will detail the three basic stages of the non-profit online media plan: Research, Social Media Profiles, and Blogging. Within each step, we will outline staff needed, rough estimates of time required for completion, and outline objectives and instructions in detail. We will cover more specific instructions and best practices for Social Media and Blogging in upcoming chapters.

Step 1: Research

Staff Needed: 1

Time Needed: 1-5 hours/week

Objectives:

- 1. Define target audience*
- 2. Identify needs of target audience*
- 3. Define major issues to be addressed with online media plan*
- 4. Define the geographic scope of your market reach*
- 5. Identify local and national organizations that align with your mission, and may assist with publicity or resources.*

Instructions:

As with many endeavors, it is important to perform adequate background research before embarking on a new project. An online media plan is no different. Since most of your key information will be readily available on the internet, it is relatively quick and easy to obtain the knowledge you need to make this project a success.

The social landscape is rapidly changing both on- and off-line, so it is important to start your background research close to the start of your project. When you decide on a start date for your implementation, try to begin your background research at least one month before you intend to start. Devote enough time to doing background research, and you should have plenty of information to aid you in your efforts.

First, you should brainstorm to identify your target audience, and consider their needs. Remember, social media is ineffective unless you can actively involve the online community in its creation. Try to think of your “ideal” user (e.g. someone who needs your service, a potential donor, or a person willing to volunteer – perhaps all three) and consider what information they would be seeking on your social media profiles, website

or blog. It also helps to think about what geographic area you wish to cover with this project. Will you concentrate on just your local community, or do you seek involvement on a national scale? There are different ways to approach each audience and geographic scope, so it helps to have a good idea of who and what you want to target before you start so that you can structure your content accordingly.

It also helps to brainstorm some potential issues you want to speak about through your online media. By creating a list of major issues, you'll have a clear direction of what to address in your social media profile content and blog posts.

Most importantly, you should research other organizations (at a local and national level) that are relevant to your cause, and may offer assistance in promoting your online efforts. Reach out to them and let them know you are creating social media profiles – ask them if they would be interested in networking or cross-promotion of online content. This will give you a head start on self-promotion when you get your project started. Social media makes it very easy to disseminate information across the internet. Use this to your advantage by allowing your network of contacts, supporters, and fellow organizations to do your marketing for you.

Step 2: Social Media Profiles

Staff Needed: 1

Time Needed: about 30-60 minutes per social media profile creation. Thirty minutes per day after profiles are active to monitor community interaction and to post new content.

Objectives:

- 1. Create social media profiles that will be the “face” of your organization.*
- 2. Disseminate information about your organization throughout social networks*
- 3. Allow supporters and other members of the community to connect with you through multiple avenues of communication*
- 4. Facilitate the viral spread of information about your organization through online social networks*
- 5. Take advantage of web/software tools that aggregate social media accounts to streamline account upkeep and updates.*

Instructions:

The first step of your online media plan should be to create social network profiles. These are free to create, easy to set up, and are relatively fast to offer a good return on your initial investment of time. We'll go into greater detail in our Social Media chapter, but this is the basic outline of what you should do.

You should start with the two most popular social media networks: Facebook and Myspace. Plan to spend about an hour signing up for the service, uploading a few photos (optional) and creating basic content about your organization. You should also reach out to any organizations you found during your research phase. If some of these organizations already have social network profiles, send friend requests to them so that you can connect. You can tap their user base to find people sympathetic to your cause, and it's a great way to get a head start on building out your friend lists on the networks.

Twitter would be another good start. It's even faster to create a profile here due to its simplicity – about 30 minutes should be adequate. Once you are signed up, send out a few “tweets” periodically to let people know that you're out there. You should begin with one tweet every day or two – you will eventually attract Twitter users that are interested in your cause. Try and make your tweets informative – send links to other organizations or blogs, or exciting news about your organization. Despite what other uses you might hear about in the media, Twitter's main use is self-promotion. It's a great way to direct additional readers to your new website, or to draw attention to a new blog post or social media profile. However, you should always ensure that your tweets are useful to your audience – sending out a constant stream of blatant self-promotion will make your users less likely to want to hear what you say.

We will cover additional social media profiles later in this document. Some other profiles to think about using are LinkedIn, YouTube, Flickr, and Change.org. We will also cover some software tools that should help streamline your workload when managing social media profiles.

Step 3: Blogging

Staff Needed: 1

Time needed: 1-2 hours/week for blog writing and updating

Objectives:

- 1. Create compelling content about your organization and relevant issues*
- 2. Strive to create content that users will share in online communities*
- 3. Raise awareness for SafePlace on a local and national level*
- 4. Invite guest bloggers from similar organizations or within the community to foster cooperation between entities*

Instructions:

Of all the steps in this online media plan, blogging will be the most work-intensive and time consuming in the long run. It also has the potential to be the most rewarding,

if you can create quality content that is shared openly among your readers. Perhaps the best course of action for blog implementation is to bring on a part-time intern to take care of your blog writing and updating. You can also rely on guest bloggers from other organizations (or from within the community) to provide content and bring fresh perspectives to your blog.

When creating a blog, it is important to commit to a publication schedule and stick to it. Blogs should be updated at least once a week – 2-3 times a week is better. If you let your blog stay static for too long, you may lose credibility and repeat visitors. To help stay on track, you should create a backlog of blog posts before you begin. If you have several posts at the ready, then you never have to worry about typing up a quick post when you are pressed for time.

Focus on quality whenever you are creating blog posts. Think about what your audience wants to hear. Preferably, you should think about some important topics in your field that your audience would like your perspective on. If you write truly interesting blog posts, your users will share them among their friends or post them to their social networks. This creates great viral exposure for your organization, and all you had to do was write a simple blog post. Let your users do your marketing for you!

We will go over blogging in greater detail in our blog chapter. For a simple and effective blogging tool, I recommend downloading Wordpress from <http://www.wordpress.org>. They also have very detailed training documents on the site that make installation simple with a minimum of technical knowledge. I will provide further instruction in the blog chapter as well.

Chapter 2: Social Media

Introduction

This chapter will cover what is necessary to create, maintain, and best utilize social media profiles for non-profit organizations. For the purposes of this document, a social media profile is defined as a web service that allows a person or organization to create a simple web page (or “profile”) about themselves, and open it up to public commentary. In this training, we will cover the creation of social media profiles, some productivity tools to reduce the time spent monitoring social media accounts, and best practices regarding social media profile content, specifically geared toward the non-profit sector.

Since time and staffing are common issues for non-profits, we will break down social media profiles into two categories:

- 1) Primary – these social media profiles are the most popular, and should therefore take priority in account creation and maintenance. In this category we include MySpace, Facebook, and Twitter.
- 2) Secondary – these social media profiles are important, but are less of a priority due to their relatively lower popularity, or narrower focus of content (i.e. only dealing with videos or pictures). These profiles could increase SafePlace’s web presence, but probably will not be as effective as the primary profiles. These accounts should be created only if there is sufficient time and resources to maintain them after the primary accounts are set up. In this category, we include LinkedIn, YouTube, Flickr, and Change.org.

A key point to remember is that a social media profile is a *conversation* – it takes a concerted effort on both the part of the creator and the audience to make it useful. As such, you should pay close attention to what your audience is saying to you (through profile comments, wall posts, tweets, etc.) and respond accordingly. You also need to be aware that you will lose some control over the commentary about your organization, since the internet is a public forum. Monitor your profiles regularly to ensure that the conversation does not prove damaging to your organization.

Social Media Best Practices

An online social media profile serves as the “face” for your organization on these social networks. Approach profile creation the same way you would approach creating a website. The content of your page should provide a brief summary of your organization, a clear statement of your mission, and references to the specific audience you are trying to reach. You should also make your content engaging and interesting. Remember, you are trying to get your audience involved in your mission – give them a reason to sympathize with your cause and become interested enough to engage with you.

A key point to remember is that while your profile information is static and unchangeable, the rest of your profile is dynamic. Users can interact with you by posting comments on your profile, sending you messages, sharing your profile among their friends, etc. You should be prepared to react to these changes. Continue the commentary that your users start (as long as it is positive and productive) by posting responses to either your profile or theirs. This will give your users a sense of involvement with your organization online, which could easily translate into offline involvement through volunteering, donations, or merely providing word-of-mouth advertising for your organization.

Another crucial point is that social media profiles must find a balance between public self-promotion and keeping private information private. Do not post any information online that you think could be harmful to your organizations or the people it serves. Since the point of this plan is to promote your organization, you should leave all of your privacy settings to “public” on these sites. However, this could invite spam or negative comments. Be vigilant about removing spam comments and potentially harmful material from your social media profiles, and you will provide a better experience for your users and people who are getting to know your organization.

Primary Social Media Accounts

MySpace

<http://www.myspace.com>

Background

Founded in 2003, MySpace was acquired by News Corp. in late 2005 (BusinessWeek, 2009). Until very recently, MySpace was the most popular social network online. It was displaced from the top spot by FaceBook. MySpace remains a very popular social network, though. In January 2009, MySpace.com recorded over 810 million pageviews (McCarthy, 2009). The average user demographic for Myspace skews a bit younger than other social networks. The main audience of MySpace is teenagers. MySpace users also tend to be less affluent, and have no college degree (Quantcast, 2009).

Account Setup

1. Go to www.myspace.com and click on the “Sign Up” tab.
2. Once you create an account, you can edit your profile information by selecting the “Profile” tab at the top menu bar and selecting “Edit Profile.”
3. Fill in the appropriate profile fields with information relevant to your organization. MySpace is targeted toward individuals, so some fields may not apply to your organization (height and “body type,” for example). You can, however, enter relevant information in the “Companies” and “Networking” sections.
4. If you wish to change the appearance of your profile, select “Customize Profile” from the “Profile” menu. Here, you can choose from some pre-designed templates, or play around with the CSS settings to alter the appearance of your profile page.
5. Once you create a profile and alter its appearance to your liking, seek out friends and colleagues on MySpace to help build your network. You can find friends by selecting the “Friends” menu, and using the “Find Friends” option. Here, you can check contacts in certain webmail accounts (like Gmail, AOL, or Hotmail), or search for friends by name and/or interest.

Additional Notes

MySpace is not very open to organizational profiles (yet), but does provide an additional networking platform to connect with your constituency. Check your profile comments often for feedback from friends, and to avoid spam on your profile page. You can also adjust your settings in the “My Account” tab to help filter out spam (by selecting the “Spam” option – this also helps you filter out unwanted friend requests) and set up email alerts when you receive a message or comment (by selecting the “notifications” option).

You can also add photos to your profile, and cross-post blogs from your organizational blog to the MySpace blog platform. You can also use productivity programs to help keep your status message updated and consistent with your other social network profiles – more on this in the “Productivity Tools” section of this chapter.

Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com>

Background

Facebook was founded in 2004 as an academic social network for Harvard University. In 2006, its scope was expanded to cover people outside of educational institutions (Phillips, 2007). Facebook overtook Myspace.com as the most popular social network in January 2009 (McCarthy, 2009). In January 2009, Facebook attracted over 1.1 billion pageviews (McCarthy, 2009). Facebook skews toward a younger audience (12-34 years old), but has a higher proportion of college graduates and affluent individuals than other social networks (Quantcast, 2009).

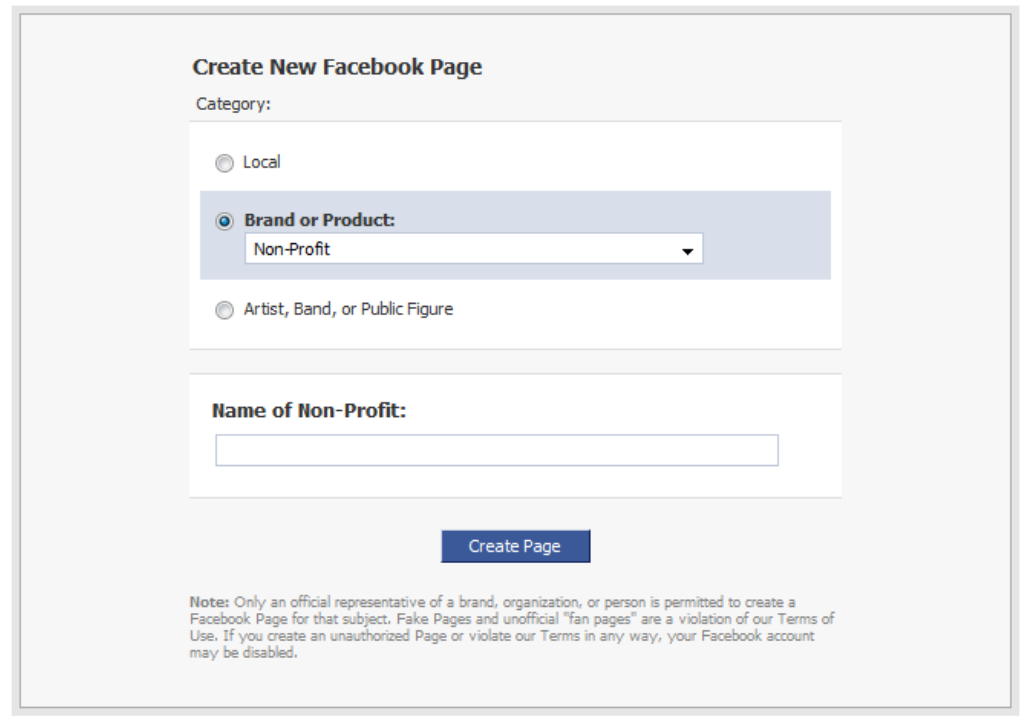
Setting Up An Account

1. Go to www.facebook.com. There is a sign-up form on the first page. Check below the form for a link that looks like this:

A screenshot of a button from the Facebook sign-up process. The button is light blue with a thin border and contains the text: "To create a page for a celebrity, band or business, [click here](#)." The text "click here" is in blue and underlined, indicating it is a link.

To create a page for a celebrity, band or business, [click here](#).

2. On the next page, select the “Brand or Product” option, and select the “Non-Profit” selection from the drop-down menu:



Create New Facebook Page

Category:

Local

Brand or Product:
Non-Profit

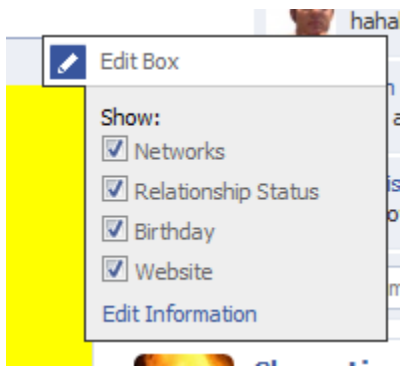
Artist, Band, or Public Figure

Name of Non-Profit:

[Create Page](#)

Note: Only an official representative of a brand, organization, or person is permitted to create a Facebook Page for that subject. Fake Pages and unofficial "fan pages" are a violation of our Terms of Use. If you create an unauthorized Page or violate our Terms in any way, your Facebook account may be disabled.

3. You can edit your new profile with information about your organization and add photos. You can edit profile information by clicking on a "pencil" icon in information boxes on your profile:



4. You can also search for friends by using contact list imports and the "people you may know" tool. You can find these tools in the "Friends" menu at the top, under the "Find Friends" option.

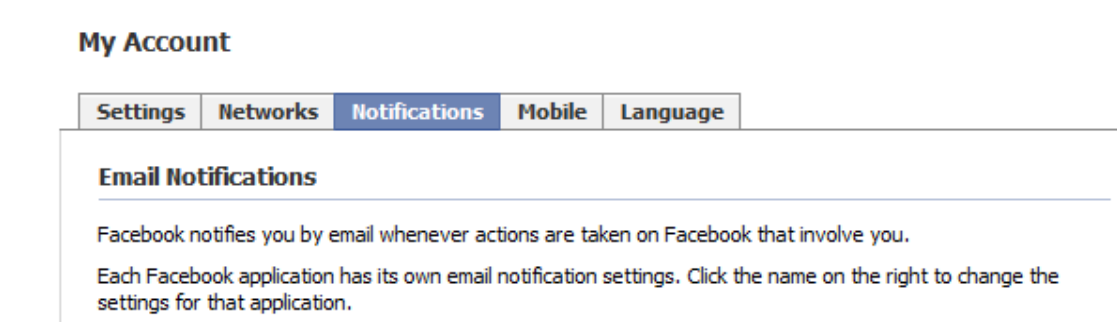
Account Setup

Facebook is a lot friendlier to organizations, as evidenced by the option to create an organizational page instead of a personal one. The same lessons apply to Facebook as in MySpace: build out your network to include current contacts and

sympathizers, and use the profile as an additional platform for web content about your organization.

Facebook offers fewer options for profile customization, in favor of a clean, uniform layout between profiles. It also skews toward an older, more mature audience. There are fewer spam problems due to the tighter privacy settings, but if you need to alter who can and cannot view your profile, you can change the settings by selecting the “Settings” menu and the “Privacy Settings” option.

You might also want to set up email notifications when you receive a message or comment. To set up notifications, go to “Account Settings” under the “Settings” menu. Then, choose the “Notifications” tab to change your alert settings:



Twitter

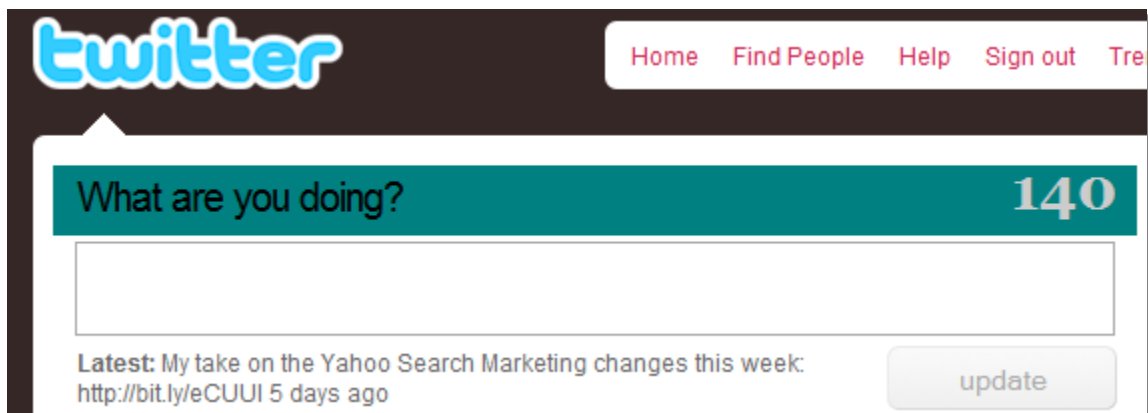
<http://www.twitter.com>

Background

Twitter began in 2006 as a side-project for a group of programmers who wanted to keep tabs on what their friends were doing (Sagolla, 2009). It has since grown to be a cultural phenomenon, allowing its users to send messages to others on the network in 140-character bites, called “tweets.” Thanks to increased media attention, Twitter saw a recent jump in popularity and recorded over 54 million pageviews in January 2008 (McCarthy, 2009). Users of Twitter tend to be college-educated younger adults (in their 20s and 30s)(Quantcast, 2009).

Account Setup

1. Go to <https://twitter.com/signup>.
2. Enter your name, username and email address.
3. After you create an account, you can find “followers” by having Twitter search your webmail contacts. You can also find people you know by selecting the “Find People” option on the top menu of your profile.
4. To send out a “tweet,” just type in a short message (under 140 characters) into the text box at the top of your profile and click on the “update” button:



Additional Notes

Twitter is a great way to send out short messages to your audience, and get a brief introduction to blogging. However, keep in mind that all messages sent out on Twitter are viewable by the public, even if they aren't following you. To send a private

message to someone, use the “Direct Messages” option on the right side of your profile screen.

Your Twitter screenname will have the @ symbol in front of it. For example, my Twitter username is @slivengood. If you would like to publicly respond to someone, simply include their username (with the @ symbol) in your tweet. If you would like to privately respond to them, use the direct message option.

It is also helpful to understand the follower/following relationship on Twitter. If someone “follows” you, they will receive updates on their homepage every time you send out a tweet. If you “follow” someone back, then their tweets will show up on your home page. Twitter is very much a conversational tool – it’s a very easy way to transmit short bits of information to and from your audience.

Occasionally, you may want to send out links to your followers, either to important websites or your own web content. Since there is a 140-character limit on tweets, this can be difficult if a URL is particularly long. Fortunately, there are a number of URL-shortening tools that will trim down the URL length to a more tweet-able size. Simply enter the URL you want to send out into a tool like TinyURL (www.tinyurl.com) or Bit.ly (<http://bit.ly>). With Bit.ly, you can even sign in to your Twitter account on the Bit.ly page and send out your Tweet right away.

For more information on getting started on Twitter, check out this helpful blog article:

<http://www.prologger.net/archives/2008/07/26/twitter-for-beginners-5-things-to-do-as-a-new-twitter-user/>

Secondary Social Media Accounts

LinkedIn

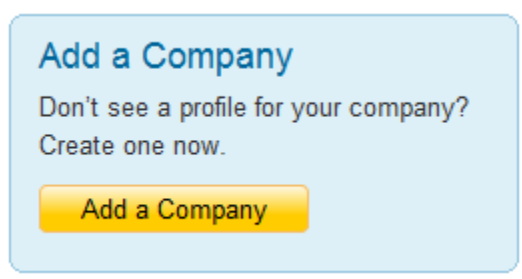
<http://www.linkedin.com>

Background

LinkedIn is a social network geared toward business users. It is helpful for job seekers and professional networking, but is more limited than sites like Facebook or MySpace due to its more specific user demographic.

Account Setup

1. Go to www.linkedin.com
2. Enter your first name, last name, and email, and proceed to the form on the next page.
3. Enter additional information about yourself and your organization.
4. Once you create an account and log in, you can create a profile for your organization by selecting the “Companies” link at the top of your home page. Click the “Add a company” button on the right side of the screen:



In order to add company information, you must be a current employee of the organization. You may need to update your employment history in your personal profile in order to proceed.

Additional Notes

For additional information on using LinkedIn for non-profits, consult the following articles in LinkedIn's learning center:

- LinkedIn's guide for nonprofits: <http://learn.linkedin.com/non-profits/>
- LinkedIn's New User guide: <http://learn.linkedin.com/new-users/>

Change.org

<http://www.change.org>

Background

Change.org is a social network designed specifically for nonprofits. While its user base is much smaller than other social networks due to its focused purpose, it offers much more utility for nonprofit organizations. You can network with similar organizations, accept donations to your cause, and offer fundraising badges that your users can put on their own websites to help support your cause.

Account Setup

1. Go to http://www.change.org/nonprofit_signup.
2. You can either select a free basic account, or choose a premium account with more functionality for \$20/month. You should probably start with a free account, then upgrade to the paid account if Change.org proves to be valuable to your organization.
3. Enter your personal and organizational information on the following page.
4. You can then set up your profile information, choose the category of your cause, and set up “donate now” buttons and widgets that you can integrate with your other social networking profiles.

Additional Notes

For more information on Change.org’s offerings, and to see a few examples of profiles, go to this web page:

http://nonprofits.change.org/blog/view/the_difference_between_changeorgs_free_basic_service_and_premium_service

YouTube

<http://www.youtube.com>

Background

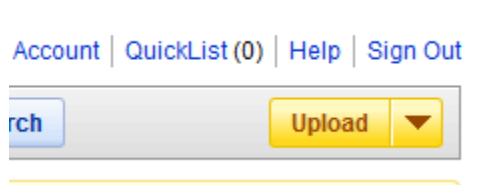
YouTube is a site where users can easily upload and display video content. You can also link an uploaded YouTube video to your own website or blog. While most people think of YouTube as a site to merely watch video content, its robust comment, rating, and video sharing systems make it a true social network.

Account Setup

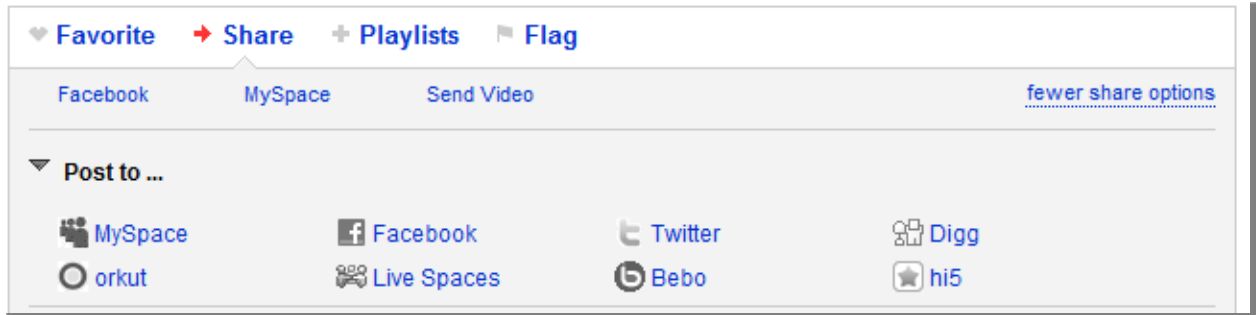
1. Go to <http://www.youtube.com/signup?next=/>
2. Enter the requested information to create your account.
3. If you already have a Google account, you can skip the account creation steps and just log in with your Google account. Google owns YouTube, so there is a great deal of interaction with other Google services.

Additional Notes

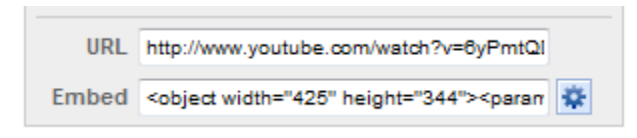
YouTube is a great place to store video content online, where it can be viewed by others or linked to your other web pages. To upload a video, click the yellow button in the top right corner of your profile page and follow the steps:



To share video content from your profile (or any public video content on the site), go to the video's YouTube page. You can select several sharing options by selecting the "Share" link below the video:



You can select which social network you would like to share the video on, and YouTube will walk you through the process. If you would like to embed the video as an object on a website or blog, look for the “Embed” HTML code on the right side of the video:



Just copy the HTML code from the text field, and paste it to the appropriate page on your website.

Flickr

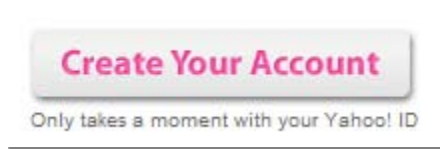
<http://www.flickr.com>

Background

Flickr is a site where users can upload photos and share them either publicly or privately. You can create a Flickr “set” to showcase photos from events that your organization is involved with.

Account Setup

1. Go to www.flickr.com
2. Select the “Create Your Account” button at the top right of the screen:



3. Follow the steps on the next page to create a Yahoo ID, which you will use as your Flickr account ID.
4. If you already have a Yahoo! Account, you can use your Yahoo login info to log directly in to Flickr with no account setup (Yahoo owns Flickr).

Additional Notes

Flickr is an excellent tool to use to store images short videos for use on other sites. You can also make your content public, where other users can share and comment on your material. To upload pictures and video, log in to your account and go to this page:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/upload/>

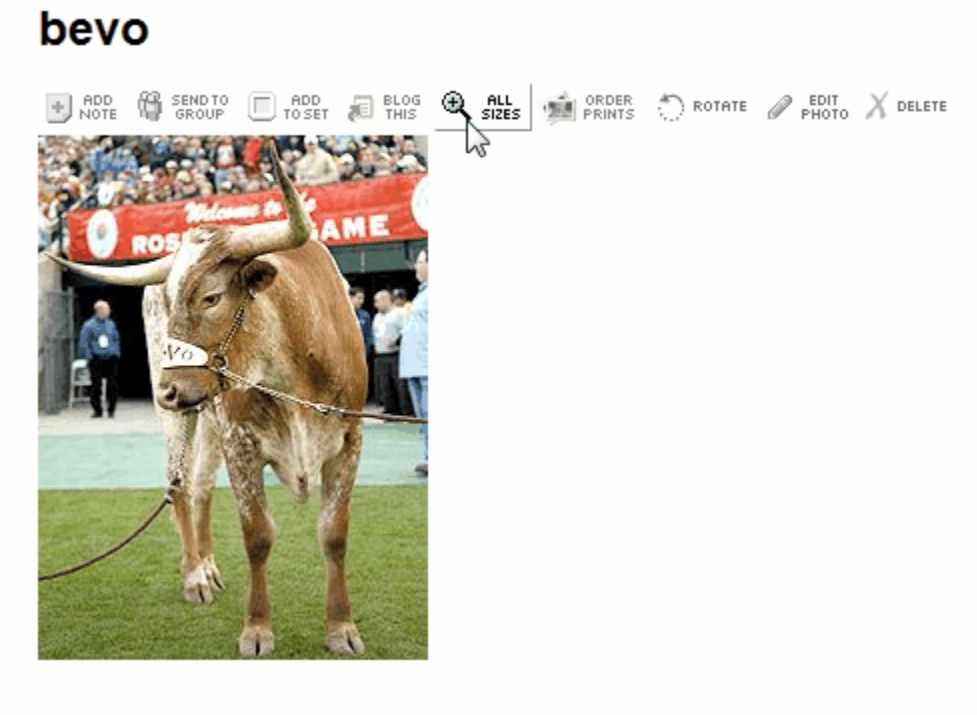
To quickly upload several pictures, you should use the basic uploader:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/upload/basic/>

You can tag your content to make it easily findable by subject matter or the people/organizations associated with it. This also helps other users find your content in Flickr searches. Be sure to take full advantage of tagging capabilities during the upload process. Also, pay attention to your privacy settings on each photo as you upload it – you can choose to make each photo publicly or privately viewable.

Free accounts have an upload limit of 100MB per month, which is a fairly decent amount of storage space for photos. If you have a lot of photo content to upload, you may want to space it out over the course of several months so that you can avoid paying for a premium account.

If you need to embed a Flickr photo to a webpage, choose the photo you want by going to the “Your Photostream” option under the “You” menu. Click on the photo you want to embed. On the photo page, select the “All Sizes” menu option:



On the next page, pick the size photo you want (it will show you the dimensions in pixels) and copy the HTML code from the text box below the photo:

To link to this photo on other websites you can either:

1. Copy and paste this HTML into your webpage:

```
<a href="http://www.flickr.com/photos/43422207@N00/2267119847/"
title="bevo by shawn livengood, on Flickr"></a>
```

Then, just paste the HTML code to the appropriate part of your website.

Productivity Tools

Ping.fm

<http://ping.fm/>

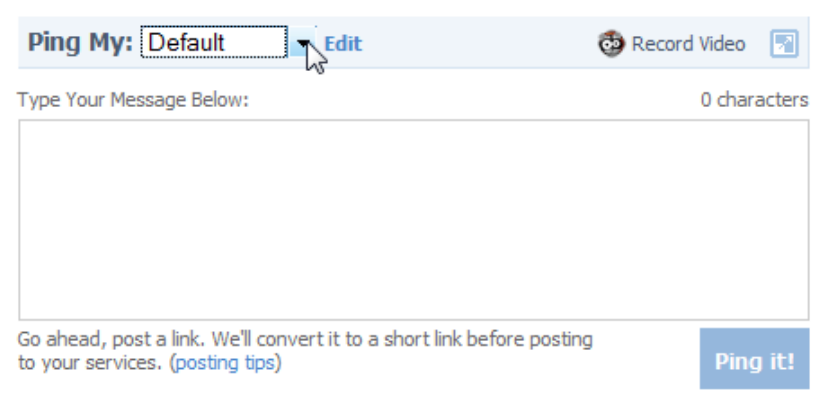
Ping.fm offers a centralized platform where you can manage multiple social media profiles from one interface, and post updates to several profiles at once. At the time of this writing, Ping.fm offers support for over 30 social media profiles, with plans to add more in the future.

After you have created your social media profiles, create a Ping.fm account at <https://ping.fm/signup/>. The account creation process is very simple – all that is needed is a name and email. Once you create an account, link your existing social media profiles to Ping.fm by using the “Add More Networks” link on your profile page:



You can select your applicable social networks from a list on the next page, and link them by entering your login credentials.

Ping.fm makes updating multiple status messages easy. Just go to the text box on your profile page and enter the text you want to update:



You can even update all of the profiles in only one sub-category: select categories like “status updates” or “microblogging” from the drop-down menu. Ping.fm

even offers automatic URL-shortening if you would like to post a link within your update.

Digsby

<http://www.digsby.com>

Digsby is a downloadable program that offers one interface for webmail, chats, and social networks. It's limited to four social networks for now (MySpace, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter), but has a great notification system and can run unobtrusively in the background so that you can get real-time social network updates while you work on other things. You can also update your status messages through Digsby, and send out tweets on Twitter. This saves you the trouble of logging in to each account separately, and allows for quick updating and monitoring of your main social network profiles.

After downloading and installing Digsby, you will need to link your social media accounts to it. From the "Digsby" menu selection, choose "My Accounts." Here, you can add email, instant messaging, and social network accounts, and adjust your privacy settings.

Nutshell Mail

<http://www.nutshellmail.com>

If you would rather receive comprehensive email updates rather than real-time notifications, Nutshell Mail is a better choice for you. This service tracks all of the updates posted on your social networks, and emails a summary to your inbox at a time you specify. To set up an account, go to <https://nutshellmail.com/register/> and create a user name and an email address you want your updates sent to. Once you sign up, you can specify the time and the frequency of your email updates, and link your relevant social networks to the service.

Like Digsby, Nutshell Mail is limited to only MySpace, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter for now. For the most part, you can only receive updates and not update profiles through their service. They did just add Twitter functionality, though, so you can send and reply to tweets through your email.

Chapter 3: Blogs

Introduction

In this chapter, we will detail how non-profits may effectively utilize blogs as a marketing and public relations tool. We will start with outlining the use of some popular blogging platforms and tools, then go into a broader discussion of blogging best practices and strategies.

Since some non-profits deal with populations with privacy concerns (i.e. domestic violence survivors), it is crucial to remember the impact of what you post online. The internet is a highly effective tool for disseminating information – it is also impossible to retract information once it is made public. When posting a blog, always be sure that no information in the post could be used to bring harm to your constituents. If there is ever any doubt, do not post.

Blog Best Practices

Perhaps the most crucial aspect of blogging is to determine a blog frequency schedule (i.e. 2-3 posts a week) and commit to it. The frequency of your blog posts will depend on how much time your staff will be able to commit to it. It is highly recommended that you do not commit to a blog frequency you cannot maintain – it is much better to post one blog a week and stick to it than post five blogs one week and be unable to keep up the pace. If a blog remains stagnant for too long, you could easily lose your audience. By keeping a steady stream of fresh updates, you can ensure that your audience will know when to expect new content.

To help maintain frequency in blog posts, you can always create a backlog of extra posts. That way, you can call on this reserve of content as needed, and replenish your creative work when time allows. You can also call on guest bloggers, such as volunteers in your organizations or employees of other nonprofits in the area. People are always eager to share their stories, and your blog can provide an ideal outlet for this purpose.

Another key element to blogging is the maintenance of blog comments. At best, comments can provide a valuable avenue for community feedback. At worst, they can be used for spam or negative comments. You should factor in adequate time to monitor your blog comments as part of your blogging strategy. If you do not have the time to monitor this, it may be best to turn comments off on your blog. Fortunately, most blog platforms offer the option of email notification when comments are posted, and Wordpress has several plugins that help filter out spam (more on this in Appendix A). When you receive a positive comment that requires a response, you should post a comment reply as promptly as possible. You should also address negative concerns and delete unconstructive blog comments. Your blog comments are a kind of running conversation with your community – make sure you are not ignoring people who want to talk to you.

Blog Platforms

Blogger

<http://www.blogger.com>

Background

Blogger is the most popular blogging site on the internet, and allows users to create their own blog (hosted on Blogger's servers) for free. Blogger is owned by Google, so there is some interoperability between Blogger and other Google services. It's very easy to set up a Blogger account (all you need is a Google account, which you can get for free by signing up at any of Google's sites), but it does limit your control over your own content, since all of the content is saved on Blogger's servers instead of your own. Also, all Blogger blog URLs have the format of *example.blogspot.com*, so this can seem unprofessional to users who are unfamiliar with your organization (you can adjust your domain settings if you own your own domain, though – more on this below).

Account Setup

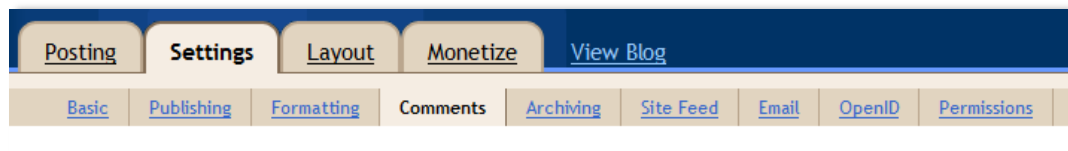
1. First, you will need to have a Google account. If you don't already have one, you can sign up for one at Google.com, Gmail, or any of Google's other portal sites.
2. Once you sign in, go to your "Dashboard" page, and click on the "Create A Blog" link:



3. At this step, you can choose between "Simple Setup," which will create a blog hosted on Blogger's servers (and with the ".blogspot.com" URL), or Advanced Setup, which allows you to host a blog on your own server and choose your own URL (that you own). We'll go over advanced setup later in the document, so the rest of these steps will cover the simple setup.
4. You will need to pick a title and a domain for your blog. Choose a title that is clear and representative of your intentions. Remember, Blogger is a social community, so you want to choose a title that will appeal to people browsing through a list of blogs. However, since Blogger is such a popular tool, finding an available domain name can be tricky – all the more reason to go with an

Advanced setup, or use a tool like Wordpress where you can have more control over your domain name.

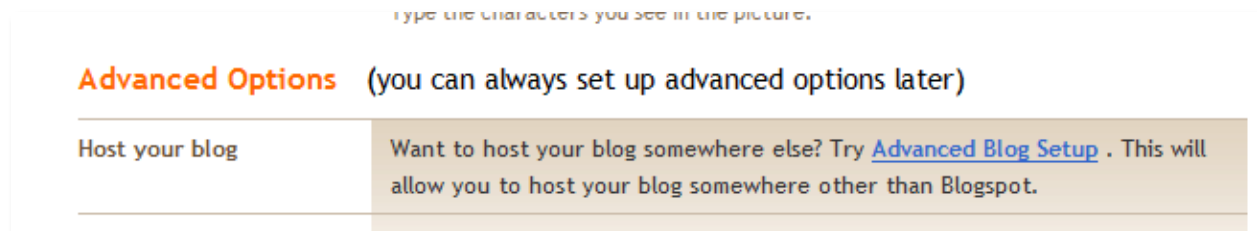
5. Next, you can choose a template design for your blog. You can modify this template or adjust the color scheme later. However, your options for design will always be a bit limited in Blogger. If you want to have a more sophisticated design for your blog, you should probably choose a more customizable platform like Wordpress.
6. After you choose your template, your blog is created. You can start a new blog post by clicking the “New Post” button on the dashboard screen, or start customizing your blog appearance by choosing the “Layout” option.
7. If you want to change settings on blog comments, you can do so in the “Settings” menu, under the tab “Comments”:



Here, you can limit who can comment on your blog, or disable comments entirely.

Additional Notes

Advanced Setup – If you want to set up a Blogger blog on your own domain, just select the “Advanced Blog Setup” link when creating a new blog:



At the next step, you will need to enter the FTP information for your web server, and specify a filename (i.e. “blog.html”) where you want your blog files to be saved on your server.

These steps will allow you to host the Blogger blog on your own domain, and avoid the stigma of having a “.blogspot.com” address appended to your URL. However, the tool is still a bit limited. If you want a more robust solution for a self-hosted blog, Wordpress offers much more opportunity for customization.

Wordpress

Background

First, an important distinction: there are two products called “Wordpress.” One is a free hosted blogging solution, similar to Blogger. This tool can be found at www.wordpress.com. Since this tool does not differ much from Blogger, it will not be covered in this document.

The second tool, found at www.wordpress.org, will be covered in this section. This tool is an open-source blogging platform that is installed on your web server, and allows you to create a highly customizable, easy to use blogging interface. Since the software is hosted on your server, you can start your blog at whatever URL you like. Some technical knowledge is required to install the software, but once it is active very little technical knowledge is needed to use it.

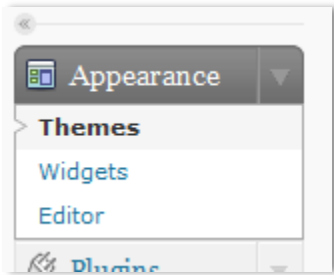
Account Setup

*Note – before you begin setup, you will need to make sure that your web host supports PHP version 4.3 or higher and MySQL version 4.0 or higher. Most web hosting services support this, but if you’re not sure you should consult your web developer or your hosting provider directly. You can also find a short list of supported webhosts here: <http://wordpress.org/hosting/>

1. Before you begin, create a folder on your website that will contain your blog files. This can be a subfolder of your main directory, such as “www.yoursitehere.com/blog.”
2. Next, download the Wordpress installation files here: <http://wordpress.org/download/>
3. Extract the Wordpress files from the .zip file.
4. Many webhosts have seamless Wordpress integration, but this varies by company. Consult your host’s documentation on installing Wordpress, if it is available.
5. If your web host does not offer easy Wordpress installation (but still supports its use), you can install the Wordpress files yourself by following the comprehensive guide here: http://codex.wordpress.org/Installing_WordPress
6. Once you install Wordpress and create a login, sign in and start blogging!

Themes

To customize the appearance of your Wordpress blog, you can download templates from Wordpress' vast library of user-generated designs. You can browse their collection here: <http://wordpress.org/extend/themes/>. Once you find a template you like, download the file. You can then install it by uploading the template file via FTP to your "wp-content/themes" directory on your server. Then, login to your Wordpress site and select the "Themes" menu from the side navigation:



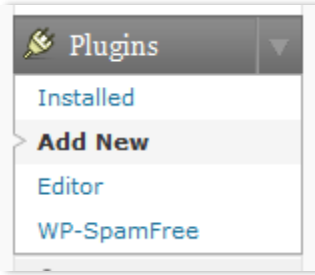
Your uploaded theme should appear on the themes page. Select it (you can preview its appearance in a popup window), and select the "Activate" link at the top right corner of the preview to make it your current theme.

Themes can also be modified like any webpage, but it requires some knowledge of HTML and CSS coding to do so. Wordpress is an open-source tool, so all of its elements can be changed if you have the appropriate coding knowledge. However, the selection of themes is so large that you can probably find a design that will suit your needs without modification.

Plugins

The main advantage of a Wordpress installation is its ability to extend its functionality. You can do this through the use of plugins. Plugins are small units of code that you can download into your Wordpress files to add features like spam protection, search engine submission, and visitor statistics to your Wordpress installation. A list of suggested Wordpress plugins appears in the appendix, but you can also browse the complete list of available plugins at <http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/>.

The easiest way to install a plugin is through your Wordpress dashboard. Just select the "Plugins" menu from the left side navigation:



Select the “Add New” option. On this page, you can either search for a plugin from the directory and install it directly, or upload a .zip file of a plugin you already downloaded. Just click “Install Now,” and Wordpress takes care of the rest.

You can also manage your existing plugins through the “Installed” option on the plugins menu. Occasionally, you may see a number in your “Plugins” menu – this means that you need to download an update for one or more plugins. Check back regularly, as many plugins need to be updated as new versions are developed.

Writing Blogs

A good blog post is 200-500 words long, deals with one specific topic, and is written in a clear, informative style. A reader should take away something of value from every blog post, whether it is information about an upcoming event, a helpful tip, or the insights of an expert in your field. If your audience feels that your blog posts are good, they will keep visiting your site for more, subscribe to your RSS feed, and tell their friends about your site. A blog is an excellent publicity tool, but only if you maintain its quality.

Whenever you hear of a new or interesting development in your field, write a blog about it. Offer your expertise and commentary, and share links to other resources as necessary. You can also check sites like Google Trends (www.google.com/trends) to see what topics are popular online – if you see something that is relevant to your organization, write a blog commenting on it.

You should also reach out to other individuals and non-profits in your community, and encourage them to write a guest post for your blog. Having a guest fill in for you will also help take the pressure off of your blog writing schedule, and offer a new perspective that your readers might find interesting. You might also consider writing a guest post for their blog in return, if they have one. This allows you to reach out to a new user base, and possibly gain some more readers for your own blog.

Chapter 4: Additional Resources

Social Media

Beth's Blog (<http://beth.typepad.com/>)

A comprehensive, frequently updated blog on social media strategies for nonprofits. Written by Beth Kanter, an established expert on non-profit marketing.

10 Simple Ways Non-Profits Can Win At Social Media Marketing

(<http://www.twistimage.com/blog/archives/10-simple-ways-nonprofits-can-win-at-social-media-marketing/>)

A helpful blog post providing additional advice and strategy on using social media profiles and productivity tools to ensure social media success for nonprofits.

Mashable – The Social Media Guide (<http://mashable.com/>)

A well-known blog detailing trends and information about social media. One particularly good Mashable article dealing with social media productivity tools can be found here: <http://mashable.com/2009/03/07/manage-multiple-profiles/>

Nonprofit Organizations and Online Social Networking: Advice and Commentary (<http://www.coyotecom.com/outreach/osn.html>)

Another helpful article dealing directly with how nonprofits can best use social media.

Blogs

Getting Attention!: Blogging For Nonprofits

(http://www.gettingattention.org/my_weblog/blogging_for_nonprofits/)

This blog has extensive coverage on nonprofit marketing strategies, and has a specific focus on blogging. It is written by Nancy Schwartz, an experienced consultant and author who specializes in marketing for nonprofits.

Nonprofit Blog Exchange (<http://nonprofitblogexchange.blogspot.com/>)

The Nonprofit Blog Exchange is a list where nonprofits can submit their blogs for links and publicity. You can submit your own blog at this url:

<http://nonprofitblogexchange.blogspot.com/2006/06/how-to-submit-your-nonprofit-blog-to.html>. However, this site requires your blog to be active for over a month, and you must have five posts before you can submit a blog. This resource is also helpful because you can review what other nonprofits are doing with their blogs, and apply the lessons to your own online publicity efforts.

10 Ways Nonprofits Can Use Blogs (<http://www.netsquared.org/blog/britt-bravo/10-ways-nonprofits-can-use-blogs>)

This is an excellent article that provides ten great ideas for blog posts. It should help give you some direction on what to write for your blog if you need a little guidance. It also provides links to examples of each strategy to give you a clearer idea of what to do.

The Nonprofit's Guide to SEM (<http://www.seobook.org/>)

The world of search engine marketing (SEM) is far too complicated for the scope of this document, and the industry is constantly shifting. This document offers a comprehensive guide on how to manipulate the content of your blog (and your website in general) in order to get better search engine results, and better visibility. It covers topics from choosing keywords for search engine optimization, using links effectively, and increasing donations. It's well worth the time to read this – it will give you a good understanding of the basics of search engine marketing.

Appendix: Useful Wordpress Plugins

*note – you can download the plugins from the links provided below, but it is much easier to install your plugins using the instructions detailed in the Wordpress section of this document. Just search for the plugin names in your Wordpress interface, and follow the on-screen instructions.

Google XML Sitemaps Generator (<http://www.arnebrachhold.de/projects/wordpress-plugins/google-xml-sitemaps-generator/>)

An XML sitemap is a crucial part of your search engine optimization strategy. By generating a sitemap and submitting it to search engines, it allows the search engine spiders to index your site more quickly. This in turn makes your website easier to find in search engine results. Creating a sitemap can be a hassle, especially if you lack the technical knowledge to create one. This plugin automates the process, and even sends the sitemap to search engines every time you create a new post.

Sociable (<http://yoast.com/wordpress/sociable/>)

If you create a great blog, people will want to share it on social media sites and news sites, bringing publicity to your efforts. Sociable makes it easy for people to share your content on their favorite social networks by adding buttons to the end of each of your blog posts. These buttons offer quick links to social media sharing, encouraging users to distribute your content quickly and easily.

WP-Spamfree (<http://www.hybrid6.com/webgeek/plugins/wp-spamfree>)

WP-Spamfree is a powerful spam filter that will help reduce the amount of spam comments you get on your blog. This will reduce your comment moderation time, and leave you more time free to actually write blogs. As with most spam filters, this program needs to be constantly updated – keep an eye out for update alerts for this plugin to make sure your spam protection remains current.

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