

Increasing Pet Adoptions and Awareness Through Social Media



Using social media during the Blue Buffalo Home 4 the Holidays adoption campaign can do a lot to spread awareness about your adoptable pets, as well as giving a boost to your traditional media campaigns as well.

The following document is designed to provide an overview of top social media platforms, as well as tips to help you better understand how social media can assist you in your efforts to generate awareness. **For specific event promotion and calendaring tips, please visit the 'How to Make Your Campaign a True Success' section of the How-To Guide.**

After determining the best type of pet adoption event for your organization based on the available staff and volunteers, as well as appropriate coordination with other registered shelters in the area, consider the tips below when moving forward with social media. The following descriptions will help to provide an overview of each type of social media platform and highlight their strengths. After reviewing, it should help you determine what's best for you and your team.

The social media platforms included in this document are:

- Facebook
- Twitter
- YouTube
- Other social media sites

Please note that different social media platforms have different terms of use and privacy policies. You are responsible for your use of these social media platforms.

facebook

Facebook Overview

A membership-based platform of more than one billion active users worldwide that allows you to connect with new and old “friends” and like-minded people in order to share updates and information, publicly or privately.

- One of the biggest benefits of this platform is how quickly and easily it allows you to spread information.
- Facebook is free to use and flexible in promoting your organization’s mission, events and adoptable pets. Use text, photos, video or applications to spread awareness!

Facebook Account Types

Facebook Page: Designed principally for companies, organizations and celebrities. By creating a Facebook Page, people can choose to “like” your animal organization, post to your public wall, send you messages, share photos and more. In turn, you can share information and photos via your wall.

Facebook Pages are public.

Facebook Group: Are best designed and utilized when you’re working to further promote a cause, share news and events with a specific community (Example: foster volunteers) and stimulate relevant discussion all in one place. **Facebook Groups can be made public or private.**

Benefits of Facebook

- Facebook is free! However, if you want to advertise a fundraising or adoption event, paid ads are also available, and highly recommended. With just a small amount of money, you can target your community to help promote your programs and events.
- Ability to build anticipation for your organization and adoption events prior to the start of the Home 4 the Holidays adoption campaign.
- Build awareness before, during and after your ongoing pet adoption efforts.
- Regularly post images of animals available for adoption for all to see and to garner additional interest
- Provide a forum for people to discuss your organization, the animals available for adoption, volunteer and donation opportunities, success stories, etc.
- Keep fan base regularly updated about how many adoptions have taken place to-date during the campaign.
- Easy to network with other organizations, businesses and media outlets.

Key Items to Remember

- A neglected Facebook Page or Group can be punishing. If your organization hasn’t posted in a while the perception potential fans may have is that you aren’t interested in keeping your fan base updated or informed. If you neglect your Facebook page, you may lose your supporters and community advocates. You don’t need to post three times a day, but do post regularly! If you feel overwhelmed, try posting once a week and grow from there.
- Make it as visual as possible. Photos work well! **Videos uploaded directly to Facebook do best.**
- Follow-up with those who post photos or leave comments. Thank your fans for stopping by. Let them know you are paying attention to your site – **it’s a conversation!**
- Ask questions that solicit interaction. (“When did you adopt your pet(s)?” “Why did you choose pet adoption?” “What is the favorite thing you love about your pet(s)?”)



- Post adoption success stories and follow-ups from families who adopt your pets! Facebook fans like to engage with organizations that are successful at their mission.
- Encourage people to post images of pets they have already adopted.
- We want to promote the good work we do, but we don't want it to be all about us. For example, if you were talking to someone at a party, how would you feel if they only talked about themselves? Look for interesting animal articles or content from other sources to "share" with your audience.
- Be succinct and to the point. Most of your audience is multi-tasking while they check Facebook, so it's best to use only the text you need. If you are sharing a story about a pet – linking to a web page or blog is okay to do.
- Try posting at different times of the day to catch different segments of your audience – not everyone checks Facebook at the same time of day!
- Try not to overwhelm people by posting too much. "Facebook Fatigue" happens and it only takes one click for fans to unlike your page forever.

How to Set Up Your Facebook Page

To easily create an account, visit www.facebook.com and enter your information (first and last name, e-mail address and a password for your account).

Once the account is created, you can establish a Facebook page quickly and easily. For information on how to create your page visit: www.facebook.com/about/pages

When you create your page, remember to fill out your "About" section thoroughly. Include your website, a contact email and phone number so fans can get in touch with your organization. You will also want to upload an icon and a cover photo.

Facebook Icon

Your Facebook icon should be representative of your organization and something your fans will recognize. A logo usually works best here.

Facebook Cover Photo

You can be creative here! A Cover Photo can be used to promote your mission, a Pet of the Week or a fundraising event. **(Even your Home 4 the Holidays adoption event!)** Use photos that are uplifting or show the mission of your organization.

By using your personal Facebook account to connect with friends and family, you can encourage them to join your page - helping to spread the word and build a fan base! Additionally, encourage members of your organization (staff members, volunteers, board members) to join your Facebook community, through newsletters and other communication, so that they can stay regularly updated about important happenings and share your organization's content.

Facebook Resources

[Mashable.com's Facebook Guidebook](#)

[Facebook Pages Guide to Causes and Non-Profits \(slideshow\)](#)

Have A Question?

Do you have a Facebook related question? Feel free to connect with us at our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/helenwoodwardanimalcenter.



Twitter Overview

Twitter is a free micro-blogging service (each tweet is limited to 140 characters – including the spaces in between the letters) that's easy to use --especially on a smart phone. Twitter has grown to over 300 million active users (tweeters) with over a billion tweets every three days, supporting 17 different languages. Twitter is an "as it happens" community, and is often the place to find breaking news stories as reported by the eye-witnesses. If there's breaking news, you'll see it on Twitter first.

What is a "tweet"?

A tweet is a post or status update. Because Twitter only allows messages of 140 characters or less, "tweet" is as much a play on the size of the message as it is on the audible similarity to Twitter.



Helen Woodward
@HWAC

Yes, our Adoptions Center is open today,
11am-6pm. Come on in and fall in love with a
forever friend!

What is a "retweet"?

A retweet is simply reposting what someone else has tweeted. You see a tweet, originally written by someone else, but want to share it with your followers, too.



Greg @gregthedogguy

18 Jul

What's your secret or favorite tip to keep your hot #dog cool in this heat & humidity? Share here!

Retweeted by Helen Woodward

What is a "hashtag"?

A hashtag is simply a way for people to search for tweets that have a common topic and to begin a conversation. For example, if you search on #LOST (or #Lost or #lost, because it's not case-sensitive), you'll get a list of tweets related to the TV show. What you won't get are tweets that say "I lost my wallet yesterday" because "lost" isn't preceded by the hash tag.

For example, Helen Woodward Animal Center wanted to promote our veterinary coupon for new clients. We included some text about the coupon, a link where people could find the coupon, and the hashtag #SanDiego so people local to the area could find the coupon.



Helen Woodward @HWAC

15 Jul

55% off your pet's vet exam at our Companion Animal Hospital.
Healthy pets = happy pets! bit.ly/SanDiegoVetCou... #sandiego

Expand

Hashtags also help us keep track of what may be trending. If there is a trending topic that relates to pets, it may be advantageous to jump in the conversation and lend your expertise!



Benefits of Twitter

Twitter is a great platform to meet new people and share information. Given the length of each tweet, 140 characters, information is easily shared and re-shared (retweeted). This is a great way to spread your adoption messages and help rally people to support your cause. You can also search out like-minded people on Twitter and “follow” them, often raising awareness of you and your organization when they look to see whether they want to “follow” you back.

Key Items to Remember

- Remain professional, but be genuine and use your own voice on Twitter. It’s better to be authentic than to overthink your tweets.
- Thank people for following you, especially if you see they like pets or animals. Click to their profile and check their interests to see if they have something in common with your organization, then mention that commonality. “I see you like Chihuahuas! Have you ever adopted a Chihuahua before?” or “Thanks for the follow. Love that photo of your cat you tweeted last week! How cute!”
- Don’t over-tweet your Facebook posts! It may be a time-saver to link Facebook to your Twitter account, but people are following you on Twitter, and not on Facebook, for a reason. Create content in a Twitter-friendly format as opposed to just tweeting your Facebook posts.
- Live-tweeting photos and adoptions from events is a fun and visual way to share your success with your followers.
- Engage with fans by asking questions, quotes about pets, or fun facts about animals.
- Tweet to people you follow. We want to engage with people on Twitter, not just blast our information to them. ***Remember that it’s a conversation.***

How to Set Up Your Twitter Account

1. Visit www.Twitter.com and click on “Sign Up.” Follow the steps to set up your account.
2. Search Twitter (www.search.twitter.com) for key words such as “dog” or “cat” “pet adoption” or the city your organization is in to find people who are talking about those subjects. Follow anyone who you find interesting.
3. Begin tweeting. Talk about you, your organization, Home 4 the Holidays, your cause, adoption totals, available animals, how people can help or donate, or pet related stories or news.
4. Be sure to interact with those who interact with you.
5. How often to tweet? Tweet at least one tweet per week day and respond to tweets and direct messages within 24 hours if you can. Like Facebook, don’t overwhelm your followers with tweets since unfollowing is easily done!

Twitter Resources

[Mashable.com’s Twitter Guidebook](#)

Have A Question?

Do you have a Twitter related question? Feel free to connect with us at on Twitter at www.twitter.com/hwac, or @HWAC.



YouTube Overview

YouTube allows billions of people to discover, watch and share originally-created videos. YouTube provides a forum for people to connect, inform, and inspire others across the globe and acts as a distribution platform for original content creators and advertisers large and small.

As of July, 2015, YouTube boasted of 1 billion unique users every month, or nearly one out of every two people on the Internet. It is also the second most popular search engine, second only to Google.

Benefits of YouTube

- YouTube is not just for silly videos anymore! The site has many new features that can help animal organizations promote their mission, their events and their adoptable animals. They have calls-to-action and linking ability through video overlay, free music to add to your videos, plus options to livestream events directly onto one's YouTube channel.
- YouTube has everything for beginners to advanced users. You don't need to be a Hollywood video editor to be successful on YouTube! You can start with simple videos and grow your presence to include call-to-action links, community networking and even live streaming.
- YouTube allows nonprofits to include a donate button right on their channel.
- Video-media is growing by leaps and bounds. Over three billion hours of videos are watched each month on YouTube. You have an audience waiting to find your organization!

Key Items to Remember

- Hopefully your organization is already using photos as a way to promote your adoptable pets. Video is a great addition to engage potential adopters! Highlight things or personality traits that are special to a specific animal: "Purrs all the time!" "Watch how Maisy loves to play Frisbee." "Sam does the funniest happy dance!"
- Video is also a great way to tell stories. Add a new dimension to your adoption success stories by including a video showing that specific pet's journey. Try to include each step of that pet's story. Here's an example:
 - Bella came in matted, dirty and neglected (*video of her on day of arrival*)
 - We gave her a special bath and groomed her (*video of her bath and grooming session*)
 - Bella is now meeting volunteers and staff members – look how happy she is (*video of her clean and happy*)
 - We're so excited Bella found a forever family! (*video of her forever family adopting her*)
 - You can help by donating or volunteering to help more pets (*video of volunteers and staff waving goodbye to Bella*)
- Behind-the-scenes footage is fun, too! Sometimes silly videos do just as well as the storytelling videos. Some ideas:
 - Kittens wrestling
 - Puppy tails wagging
 - Doggy pool playtime
 - Volunteers enjoying the adoptable pets
- Remember to interact with fans who comment on your videos. This is still about engaging and having a conversation with new supporters.



How to Set Up Your YouTube Account

1. Go to www.youtube.com, click the "Sign In" button, then the red "Create An Account" button in the upper right hand corner.
2. Fill in all the information about your organization in your "Settings" tab.
3. Organize your Channel page. Remember to add links to your other social media sites!
4. Begin uploading videos!

YouTube Resources

[YouTube's Sign-Up Guide](#)

[YouTube's Guide for NonProfits](#)

[Organize Your YouTube Channel Page](#)

Have A Question?

Do you have a YouTube related question? Feel free to connect with us at [our YouTube Channel](#).

Other Social Media Sites

There are literally hundreds of social media sites to choose from! It would take a novel to explain them all.

The good news is your organization does NOT need to be on each and every one. Only choose the social media sites that work for your organization, staff and time limitations. Do you prefer photos? Try focusing on Facebook. Do you excel at videos? Stick to YouTube.

Remember, social media is about engaging with people and creating conversations. Don't use a social media tool just because it may be the next new piece of technology that everyone is talking about. It's okay to experiment, but only do what your staff and volunteers feel comfortable with.

We have included brief descriptions of other social media sites to try, if you want to branch out and do something different:



LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a social networking website for people in professional occupations. As of July, 2015, LinkedIn reports more than 380 million acquired users in more than 200 countries and territories, mainly for individual's professional networking.

[Using LinkedIn to network among other professionals](#)



Instagram

Instagram

Instagram is a fun and quirky way to share your life with friends through a series of pictures. Snap a photo with your mobile phone, then choose a filter to transform the image into a memory to keep around forever. Instagram also has a video option that allows you to quickly take and edit sixty second videos. Very easy to use! [You can also use InstaStories](#) to quickly show potential adopters what's happening at your adoption events!

[Instagram Help Center](#)

Have A Question?

Do you have an Instagram related question? Find us on Instagram at @HWAC.

Pinterest

Pinterest

Pinterest is an online site where you can save (pin) and organize images and videos into different groupings called boards. (Think like an online pin board!) You can upload images and videos yourself, or you can add images and videos that you've found on other web sites. You can also "re-pin" pictures and videos that other people have added to their Pinterest boards.

You can invite friends to your boards and you can "follow" other people with similar interests. Your boards can be secret, which means that only you as the creator and people you have invited to the board can see it, or they can be public which means that they are visible to everyone. Pinterest is aspirational and inspirational. For instance people add pins that illustrate things they love, places they want to go and clothes they would like to have.

[Discover Pinterest](#)

Have A Question?

Do you have a Pinterest related question? [Find us on Pinterest!](#)