

# Chapter 3.4

## Digital media and social networks

### Benefits of this chapter

Did you know that there are over one billion Google searches each day? That's 12,000 searches each second. Did you know that Facebook acquired more than 100 million users within the first nine months of its launch? It took television 13 years to create that many users.

And did you know that there are over 200 million blogs currently on the Internet with 54% of bloggers posting or "tweeting" on a daily basis, 80% of which come from cell phones?

Numbers like these make it is easy to understand why more federations are becoming increasingly interested in digital media – the internet is becoming the primary mean of distributing information. The more effective a federation is at marketing online, the better it is able to promote its brand and develop a positive image of itself.

With so many digital and social media available, it can be overwhelming when trying to determine which ones can have the biggest positive impact on your federation. This chapter explains some of the different kinds of digital media available and how they can help you reach your federation's objectives.

## Introduction

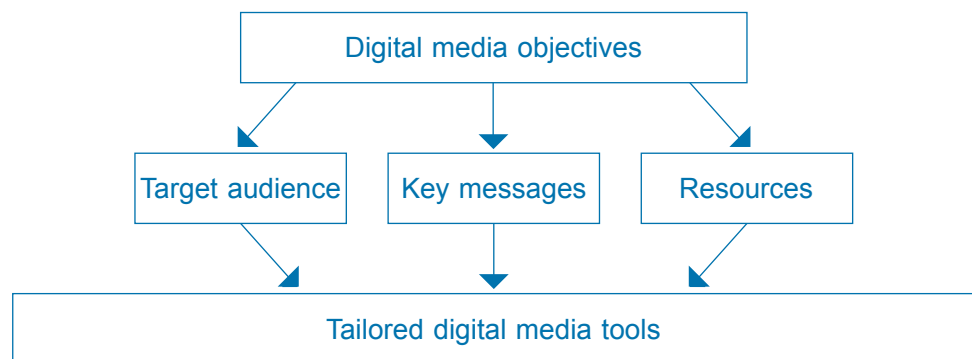
Like any marketing strategy, digital media present national aquatics federations with certain advantages and disadvantages.

For instance, digital media allow federations to market to an international audience and build brand awareness at a low cost. Unfortunately, that advantage is not exclusive to any particular industry or sport. With an increasing number of sports federations implementing new media initiatives, strategy is critical to differentiate yourself from the competition and achieve positive results.

The first step to developing a digital media strategy is identifying the digital key objectives. There are a number of objectives that were established in Chapter 1 – your mission, vision and values. Whether your federation wants to build awareness, mobilise youth to participate in sport, or increase sponsorship, keep in mind that not all of these objectives can be achieved through digital media.

First, your federation must choose which objectives can be (partially) through digital media. These are referred to as the digital objectives.

Diagram 3.4 a  
Process for choosing digital media tools



Since the digital objectives do not include all of the objectives, it is critical that your federation evaluates the intended target audience, key messages and available resources (people, time and budget) before employing a digital media strategy. Still, we quite often hear from federations that after creating digital objectives, they simply choose the most popular social networking site and find that it does little to market or promote the federation. It seems that the foundation of this error lies in a lack of understanding of digital media and its underlying concepts. As a result, there exists a need to clarify the language of digital media.

# Understanding the language of digital media

Digital media is simply content that can be transmitted over the Internet.

To help simplify the digital media world, here are a few of the most common digital media tools that are currently being used by sports federations:

- A blog (formal term is web log) is a type of website that allows an individual to post commentary, descriptions of events, personal experiences or other material such as graphics and videos. Examples include Blogger, Typepad and WordPress.
- Social networking sites are online communities that feature user-generated content and interactive elements such as personal blogs, discussion boards, chat rooms, etc. Examples include MySpace, LinkedIn and Facebook.
- Micro blogging sites allow users to broadcast brief text updates or micromedia (text messages, instant messages, e-mail, digital audio) to a restricted or unrestricted group chosen by the user. A good example of micro blogging is Twitter.
- Video and image hosting websites allow users to share and embed personal photographs. These sites are widely used by bloggers to host images that are used in blogs and social media. Examples include Flickr and YouTube.
- Web search engines are tools designed to search for information on the Internet. The search results are listed based on the number of times the search word appears in the site. Examples include Google, Yahoo, and Ask.com.

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## Clarifications and simplifications

- Internet Forum (also known as a message board) is an online discussion site primarily used to spur discussion and initiate interest groups.
- User Generated Content is content produced and submitted by members of an online community. Typical types of user-generated content include: blog posts, articles, reviews, comments, videos, podcasts, images, etc.
- A post is a user-submitted message enclosed into a block containing the user's details and the date and time it was submitted. Posts are contained in threads, where they appear as boxes one after another.
- Blogging is when an individual adds user-generated content to a blog.
- A podcast is a series of digital media files (either audio or video) that are downloaded through the Internet onto special software applications (podcatchers such as iPod, Zune, Winamp, etc.).
- A tweet is a micro-blog post on the Twitter website.
- Viral marketing uses creative online marketing techniques to increase brand awareness through word of mouth.

## Creating synergy

Digital media has come along way in the last decade and is continuously growing. There are many advantages of expanding your aquatics federations into the digital world. It allows your federation to market to a much larger audience and build brand awareness at a low cost.

When deciding to go digital it is very important to remember to refer back to the same objectives and goals which were defined in Chapter 1.2. This will ensure that your federation will speak in the same tone regardless of the media tools used.

## Customising from the core

With so many terms and tools that currently exist in the digital media marketplace, it can be frustrating at times to design a customised strategy that satisfies the event's digital objectives. Three core elements of the digital objectives must be identified:

### Target audience

Each digital media tool is designed to reach a different target audience. Knowing your target audience automatically narrows down the number of digital media tools available for selection.

### Messaging

Some key messages are (not easily understood and require in-depth explanation), whereas others consist of a simple tag-line that promotes branding. The level of complexity will determine what type of tool(s) will best deliver the message of your federation.

### Resources

Depending on the digital media tool, it may require monitoring, frequent updates, or costs (if a registration fee exists). Calculating the number of staff, the amount of time, and the available budget will help determine the type of tool(s) to use.

## Mobilise the audience

Unlike traditional media, digital media has the ability to encourage online users to take action offline. The Internet provides the ability to connect individuals from all over the world under a single interest.

With the support of many, individuals have a greater tendency to act. Also, connecting your federation with your overall message can help evoke emotion and inspire individuals to continue building a support base online, while spreading the word offline. Engaging users creates excitement for your sport and enables a clear message to be delivered.

A digital campaign starts with the development and promotion of memorable key messages and then continues with creating an online forum that allow your sport supporters (and non-supporters) to engage in discussion. Supporters can bond online, which creates a support system for related actions performed offline.

Whether the digital objective is to increase the number of supporters for your sport, a major championship or local event, to generate revenues or to market your sport, a digital media campaign can revolutionise the way your federation is being marketed online marketing can mobilise your audience.

## Useful tips

Digital media can spread quickly and likewise can be forgotten quickly. These helpful tips will help keep your federation focused:

- Creating content and consistently updating online marketing materials is essential; this does not mean to speak about anything and everything.
- The key messages should not be lost; however, creative means of delivery is encouraged. Using various formats and designs keeps the message fresh and exciting.
- Once the target audience has been determined, messaging created and resources calculated, the right tools can be chosen.
- By simply eliminating the tools that do not reach the target audience, that do not provide the right platform to deliver the message or that are not compatible with the available resources, the tools that remain will be the best digital channels to reach the intended market.