

# Social Media Guide

An introduction to social media and best practices for Liberal candidates



# Introduction

Without a doubt, reaching out to voters on-line has become tremendously important in recent years. Using the internet to connect with individuals can help raise a politician's profile, introduce him or her to the voters, and translate into votes on Election Day.

With the rise of social media applications such as Facebook and Twitter, the ability to connect with voters has become that much easier, allowing even the smallest campaign to take its message nation-wide. On the other hand, the emergence of these tools has led to increased expectations of how a politician ought to be using the web, included but not limited to: maintaining a legitimate presence on Facebook, Twitter and other places like Youtube and Flickr. Simply put, candidate web sites alone are no longer enough.

As a result, candidates should make serious efforts to take advantage of the social media tools available to them. This guide serves as an introduction to these tools — many of which are currently being used by Liberal MPs and candidates — and identifies best practices for each.

# 1. Facebook for politicians

Facebook is a social network that allows users to connect with each other, share short messages, photos, videos and other content. Every action a user takes on Facebook is broadcast to that user's social network of "friends" or "supporters," creating a viral effect that makes it easy for you to get visibility quickly and at no cost.

If you're just getting started with Facebook, don't worry. While most of the Liberal Caucus has a Facebook Page (described below), most MPs have under 500 "fans". This section is meant to help you catch up quickly. Your goal should be to develop an advanced Facebook presence in time for the next election.

Facebook is increasingly important for the modern Canadian politician because **10.6 million Canadians have Facebook profiles** (out of the 17 million Canadians who are online) and they're visiting the site 2-3 times per day.

## Getting started

1. Assign management of your Facebook Page to the same person ( i.e. a volunteer) you have tasked with managing your website. In this document, we refer to this person as your "web editor."
2. Have him or her read this guide and also take time to examine how other politicians are using the service.
3. Support him or her in their requests for status messages, and photo or video content as needed - they are pushing out this content to your Facebook fans in order to grow your base of supporters.

### **Why Pages & How to build a Facebook Page if you already have a profile**

Facebook "Pages" are the appropriate tool for politicians to use on Facebook. Pages have no limits on the number of fans you can amass, and enable you to send mass updates and promote your page in a variety of ways. The vast majority of the Liberal Caucus are set up on their own Facebook Page and you should endeavour to move to one as soon as possible, if you are not

already. This is particularly true for new candidates.

Unfortunately, if you are only set up on a Facebook profile, there is no way to migrate your friends to your new Facebook page. You will have to set up the new page, and then let the friends from your profile know that they should become a fan via a status update or note.

Once your page is up and running, you should move to shut your profile down, or make it extremely private using Facebook's privacy settings. Candidates in particular should spend time ensuring there is nothing potentially embarrassing to them or the party on their existing Facebook profile. If you find something and can't remove it yourself, contact whoever has posted the offending item and politely ask them to remove it. If they refuse, contact the party immediately for support.

### **What to do with your account once it's live**

When you're starting out with Facebook, you should set some modest, achievable goals. These might be:

#### **Update your status message once a day**

A status message is a one line update about what you are doing. For your fans on Facebook, it's a window into your life and a way to feel closer to you. The easiest way to organize yourself to do this is to email your web editor with the sentence you'd like posted and they should try getting it online as soon as possible.

#### **Post a link to a news article or add new photos once a week**

The same way you may have posted photos or links to articles on your website, you should post them on Facebook.

#### **Moderate comments that appear on your Facebook page**

It is important to nurture a respectful tone on your Facebook page. So when your web editor posts something, they should watch the comments that appear on that item and remove comments that are inappropriate. When you remove an inappropriate comment, first copy and paste the comment into an email you will send the commenter. After you have removed the comment, email the commenter informing them why their comment was inappropriate. This usually defuses any negative reactions they may have, particularly when they see their words in front of them again.

## **Advertise your events using Facebook's events feature**

When you have an event that's open to the public, you should try to promote the event on Facebook. Your fans will receive the event invitation and will be able to RSVP. A supporter who RSVPs will broadcast that fact to their own friends, potentially leading to more interest in the event.

### **See Facebook in action:**

- [www.facebook.com/michaelignatieff](http://www.facebook.com/michaelignatieff)
- [www.facebook.com/liberalca](http://www.facebook.com/liberalca)
- [www.facebook.com/pages/Bob-Rae/8034824801](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Bob-Rae/8034824801)
- [www.facebook.com/mhallfindlay](http://www.facebook.com/mhallfindlay)

## **Tips for advanced users**

### **5 ways to optimize your Facebook page:**

**1. Assign someone to manage your page.** If you have not yet assigned management of your Facebook page to a staffer, you should consider doing so now. As your fan base grows, your ability to manage your page will diminish.

**2. Link to your Twitter and Youtube profiles.** If you are on Twitter or Youtube, consider adding the full link to your Twitter or Youtube page (or even your website) to the text box underneath your photo on your Facebook page. This helps let your fans find your other social media pages. See <http://www.facebook.com/michaelignatieff> for an example.

**3. Tag any photos you publish on Facebook.** When you tag a photo on Facebook with the name of another Facebook user (or give permission to your fans to do the same), that person's social network sees the photo. So if you took a photo with a constituent, and tag them in your photo, this means you reach not just that constituent but his or her entire network, also. Tagging is time consuming, but highly worthwhile.

**4. Make your Facebook status updates more casual in tone.** Your Facebook Status offer your supporters a chance to feel more connected with you. As a result, you can create a stronger bond with them by making your status updates more casual in

tone. You might give updates as to where you are, the things you're doing and your thoughts on various subjects. The main thing is to sound authentic and let people inside your political life while being respectful and professional.

**5. Get your Fans to "Suggest to a Friend."** Send an update to your fans asking them to use the "Suggest to friends" feature, which is found directly underneath your photo on your Facebook page. This feature allows your fans to send a message to all or just some of their friends pointing them to your page and asking them to become fans.

## 2. Twitter

Increasingly, voters are seeking the opinions, thoughts and daily happenings of their elected representatives. Twitter is a great service to share this information and stay connected with potential supporters on-line.

The service describes itself as a "real-time short messaging service that works over multiple networks and devices." Politicians are using Twitter to deliver short, personal, positive, and sometimes humorous or informal messages to voters. Messages can be sent from mobile phones, but must not be longer than 140 characters.

**Here's a good video to get you started:**

- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=J0xbjIE8cPM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J0xbjIE8cPM)

While there is a lot to learn, perhaps the best way to do so is to just sign up and see how others are using it. One of the Party's most active users is Ujjal Dosanjh. He posts to Twitter daily, sharing his thoughts and ideas. He also interacts with other users. Here are a few examples of what he is posting:

- **ujjaldosanjh**: is calling into the riding to determine issues of concern. HST tops all others.
- **ujjaldosanjh**: at the constituency office. The state of salmon in BC: Terrible.
- **ujjaldosanjh**: just announced: I'm going to China with Ignatieff in Sept. Visit <http://www.newpartnership.ca> to engage

**See Twitter in action:**

- <http://twitter.com/ujjaldosanjh>
- <http://twitter.com/MichelleSimson>
- <http://twitter.com/deniscoderre>
- [http://twitter.com/m\\_ignatieff](http://twitter.com/m_ignatieff)
- [http://twitter.com/Carolyn\\_Bennett](http://twitter.com/Carolyn_Bennett)

There are also two websites that bring together the tweets of all the federal politicians and media using Twitter. These sites are:

- <http://tweetcommons.com>
- <http://politwitter.ca>

### 3. Flickr

Candidates can't meet with all voters during a general election, but they can make efforts to document their meetings and events, allowing others in the community to learn more about his or her campaign. To do this, we've found it useful to share photographs from events on-line shortly after each event finishes, demonstrating the candidate is active in the riding.

How to begin: Try to ensure a photographer is organized for all the major events in the campaign. It doesn't have to be a professional, just someone who is responsible for taking photographs and posting them on-line. After each event, the best photos should be uploaded to the candidate's account at [www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com). Setting up an account at Flickr—an on-line photo-sharing web site—is free and takes about 5 minutes.

Once the photos are uploaded and organized into sets, people can browse, share and comment on photos, allowing a more interactive campaign. Moreover, photos then can be streamed directly to his or her facebook page and/or candidate web site.

**Here's a good video to get you started:**

- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=3R\\_MWGFvDEE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3R_MWGFvDEE)

**See Flickr in action:**

- [www.flickr.com/photos/ignatieff](http://www.flickr.com/photos/ignatieff)
- [www.flickr.com/photos/ujjaldosanjh](http://www.flickr.com/photos/ujjaldosanjh)
- [www.flickr.com/photos/rodgercuzner](http://www.flickr.com/photos/rodgercuzner)

## 4. Youtube

For those interested in taking their campaign to the next level and engaging voters face-to-face, candidates may choose to employ video messages on Youtube. Youtube is a free service that allows users to watch, share and comment on videos.

One of the benefits of video is you are better equipped to personalize your message. You can make appeals directly to voters, bypassing lengthy paragraphs. Videos need not be professionally shot; however, candidates should make an effort to look professional whenever in front of a camera. Remember, once these videos are uploaded to Youtube they are available to the world to see.

Youtube can be a great place to post creative videos or responses. During the Conservative personal attack ad campaign, Michael Ignatieff recorded a video response and uploaded it to youtube, allowing him to immediately reach 50 000 viewers and generate positive headlines in the process. The video was posted online on hundreds of web sites and even received significant coverage in the mainstream media. This is just one example of how you can leverage social media to get your message out.

Perhaps the most important thing to keep in mind is that in order to get the most out of these tools, candidates must reach out to their team and encourage them to be creative. Moreover, candidates should be willing and able to help their team in this regard.

#### **See Youtube in action:**

- [www.youtube.com/user/ignatieff](http://www.youtube.com/user/ignatieff)
- [www.youtube.com/user/UjjalDosanjh](http://www.youtube.com/user/UjjalDosanjh)

#### **Here's a good video showing you how to upload video to youtube:**

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CsXeCJTny2A>

## **5. Blogs**

Blogs are a useful tool for candidates, allowing them to reflect, share opinions, and discuss various topics and events in the form of an online journal. Entries are posted to the web site relatively often (2-3 times per week), generally informal, and do not usually run longer than 300-400 words.

Maintaining a blog allows candidates to get closer to their audience, their supporters. It also allows media, supporters and voters to learn more about the candidate, their life, and how they think.

Some examples of successful Liberal MP blogs:

- <http://www.shawnmurphyp.ca/blog.php> (Shawn Murphy)
- <http://bobrae.ca/en/blog> (Bob Rae)
- <http://glenpearson.wordpress.com> (Glen Pearson)