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Social Media During Upheaval

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Change is the only constant on social media platforms. With each new generation, communications preferences evolve, and the emerging younger audiences yearn for their own distinct tools for expression. The abrupt shifts on Twitter occasioned by Elon's Musk's recent purchase of the platform have been more jarring than subtler shifts of the past, forcing many people and organizations to quickly consider their next steps for Twitter usage.

Social media managers at nonprofits are familiar with having to make decisions as new platforms emerge and engagement on older ones dwindles. With Twitter's previous imperfect moderation tools now compromised and undermined, [making hate speech on Twitter more prevalent](#), social media managers are now being forced to make difficult decisions based on ethical dilemmas, not engagement factors.

When making a decision on whether to step back or stay engaged on Twitter, the factors to consider are true across all platforms:

- **Values in front:** As with all nonprofit work, the values of the organization should be present in all levels of the work to uphold the public trust and reputation of the organization. Consider the value your organization is receiving from being on Twitter and whether it is essential to your advocacy or membership efforts. Then think about your organization's values. Is being on a

platform where hate speech and misinformation are being allowed incompatible with those values?

- **Be strategic:** Invest your time on platforms that connect your nonprofit's mission with your target audience. Look at which audiences you are trying to keep engaged and make sure your content is getting through to them. These statistics change with time; you can keep track of recent research on social media from trusted resources, such as [Pew Research Center](#).
- **Be practical:** Use content scheduling products such as [Hootsuite](#), [Agorapulse](#), or [Sprout Social](#) to post your content across multiple platforms to save time and expand your reach.
- **Adjust, don't just react:** There are varied degrees of change you can make if you decide to pull back from a platform, such as discontinuing any advertising you are doing on the platform; continuing to post but pulling back on the amount; going silent but keeping your account open; or leaving the platform entirely. Take your time in determining a strategy that is adaptable.
- **Communicate changes:** Internal and external communication about changes is critical for successful strategy shifts. Make sure to check in with your team to stay informed about everyone's comfort with staying on a platform during chaos. If the final decision is to exit a platform, make sure you don't leave your audience in the dark. Post an update to inform people where to find your content.
- **Protect assets:** Avoid deactivating your account to safeguard against imposter accounts coming in and impersonating your account. Additionally, take necessary steps to reserve your name and account with potential replacement platforms such as [Mastodon](#), [Cohost](#), [CounterSocial](#), or [Post](#).

Why bother?

After an eventful several years, many people have had to reexamine their relationship with social media for their mental health. The addictive nature of social media platforms has led to new technology such as preset timers to remind people to exit platforms on cell phones, and the rise of new social media platforms branding themselves as healthier versions of social media. Just as individuals must look at the reasons behind their social media consumption, organizations must look at the reasons behind their social media output to conserve valuable energy and time.

During a workforce shortage that has many nonprofits struggling to keep staff, social media is often the first task trimmed. Despite the urge to avoid social media altogether during times of unrest in the digital world, complete silence can be more dangerous than you might initially think. Silence can leave many users uncertain about the health of an organization. Keeping up social media is important for keeping the public engaged, especially younger generations, with [Hubspot's Nonprofit Market and Fundraising Trends for 2022 Report](#) showing that “the top reason millennials and Gen Z may not donate [to an organization] is due to a poor social media presence.” This doesn't mean that overworked staff should work overtime to create content daily or even weekly. Hubspot reports that, “Gen Z and millennials want to receive updates from nonprofits at least monthly.”

Whatever the next course of action is for your nonprofit, make sure the decision is keeping you connected to the community you serve and is protecting the workforce that makes your mission come alive. Clear communication is the foundation of trust and, as society evolves, the form can be just as important as the message.

More Resources:

- [From quitting to blocking: How to protect yourself on Musk's Twitter](#), The Washington Post, December 1, 2022.
- [How to prepare for life after Twitter](#), New York Times, November 16, 2022.
- [Tweeting through uncertainty: Candid's approach to nonprofit Twitter](#), Candid, November 10, 2022.
- [Nonprofits Consider Leaving Twitter Over Platform's Uncertain Future](#), The Chronicle of Philanthropy, November 28, 2022.
- [Update: Guidance on Post-Musk Twitter](#), M+R Blog, December 1, 2022.