



Getting the Most out of Social Media for Your MRE Program

Once your marriage/relationship education (MRE) program makes the decision to dive into social media, you might ask, “What next?” Organizations frequently have questions on how to move from pondering the value of social media to developing, executing, and monitoring an effective social media strategy. What messages resonate with fans? How often should you post? How do you measure results? This Tip Sheet offers guidance for MRE programs on how to successfully reach couples through social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and blogs.

What to write

A common frustration among organizations is figuring out what to post. The key is giving fans what they want. A 2010 [ExactTarget](#) study identified the top reasons why users “liked” a brand on Facebook (see more information on “likes” in “What to Measure” below). Among the reasons given for liking a brand, the ones most relevant to MRE programs include: receiving discounts; learning more about the company; showing support; and getting updates on future programs or projects. Here are some ideas on what to post:

1. **Give discounts and/or special offers.** If you charge for your MRE program(s), offer your social media followers the opportunity to attend at a reduced rate—or offer an incentive for participating. Discounts and incentives reward your followers for their loyalty and encourage them to share about your program with others who may benefit



from your services. **Sample:** Register for our programs by January 15th and save 10% using this special Twitter code: EASYSAVE10 (for online program registration).

2. **Repurpose existing literature.** If your organization has handouts or brochures, you can borrow excerpts from those materials and redistribute that content across your social networks. **Example:** If you have a handout on “50 Ways to Improve Communication with Your Partner,” share one tip per week and you’ll have content for nearly a full year!
3. **Communicate tips that couples can incorporate into their daily lives.** Give your followers concise, practical tidbits of information and they’ll keep coming back for more. **Sample:** Quick date night tip: Use this time to discuss each other’s hobbies and interests; don’t focus on bills or any other “housekeeping” items.

4. **Share links to interesting articles or research briefs.** Chances are, you're already reading numerous articles and research materials. Instead of simply filing these resources away, share them with your organization's followers, who obviously have similar interests. You may also consider sharing the information found on www.healthymarriageinfo.org or www.twoofus.org.
5. **Ask questions.** People love to give opinions (especially if they can do it in a public forum) and most people can relate to relationship issues. Open-ended questions (rather than those that can be answered with a simple "Yes" or "No") usually get the best response. **Sample:** What's your biggest challenge in maintaining effective communication with your partner?
6. **Comment on a popular news item.** Is a certain celebrity in the news in a messy divorce? Did a popular TV show feature a compelling story about marriage or relationships? Make it fun while sneaking in some advice about relationships and marriage. **Sample:** Who watched last night's episode of Modern Family? Has anyone ever had to deal with a meddling mother-in-law? Check out our website for tips on dealing with in-laws and strengthening your relationship!
7. **Share your multimedia content.** One of the benefits of social media is that many platforms co-exist peacefully and complement each other. For example, on your Facebook or Twitter profiles, you can share YouTube videos of a workshop session. You can also embed the video(s) on your blog.
8. **Share testimonials from past participants.** Whether in written or video form, testimonials let people know that your program produces results. **Sample:** Carolyn Timson came to our Healthy Marriage, Healthy Love class last November and has seen a huge improvement in her communication skills. "I tried to make my husband see things my way all the time," Carolyn says. "Now we're able to create mutual ground."

What to Measure

Tracking your social media metrics is essential to determining the effectiveness of your social media efforts. See the NHMRC Tip Sheet "[Introducing Social Media as a Tool for MRE Practitioners](#)" for a more detailed description of the following platforms. Below is an overview of what to look for in each of the following social media platforms:

Facebook – You will want to measure both the quality and quantity of social media interactions. Encourage workshop participants to follow you on Facebook to get ongoing tips about relationship skills and upcoming services. Facebook makes it easy to grab statistics through its [Insights](#) feature, which provides page owners data and information helpful to growing their following.

1. **Comments or "Likes" per post.** Facebook implemented the "like" button in 2009, which gives users a quick way to say they enjoy an update from an organization. Since it is easier to click the "like" button than it is to leave a comment, organizations may have a higher number of "likes" than comments.
2. **New followers.** Organizations might find that growth is slower at the beginning; response

will likely ramp up as more followers find your organization, participate in MRE services, and spread the word to their friends.

3. **Unsubscribers.** This number should be low. If you notice a spike in unsubscribes, look at your content in the days prior and assess what might be turning people off—subject matter, frequency of posting, etc. You may need to adjust your content so it is more appealing and relevant to your audience.
4. **Active users.** Track active users. These are followers who view your content (updates, photos, or links), leave a comment, or otherwise interact with your page.
5. **Monthly growth percentage.** Track the number of followers from month to month. Your growth will usually be steady, but check for spikes subsequent to any media mentions, newsletter distributions or program events.
6. **Wall post frequency (posts by users).** Unless you restrict the settings, your followers will be allowed to post comments, photos, or videos on your profile. The more fans who post (positive mentions), the more value your profile is likely to have to those you are trying to reach. Encourage followers to share photos of themselves with their significant others or to give their opinion about a specific relationship issue.

Twitter – Updates are limited to 140 characters, including any web addresses featured in the post. Encourage program participants to follow you on Twitter to get tweets about upcoming events or services or to stay connected to the program. Applications like HootSuite or TweetDeck provide URL shortening to help the message fit within the character restraints. Some of these applications

also provide cross-platform integration and data tracking capabilities.

1. **Mentions or @replies.** If someone else mentions your organization by placing an “@” symbol in front of the name, you will get a notification. The more mentions you get, the higher your engagement will be.
2. **Retweets.** If someone shares one of your updates, it is called a “retweet.” Think of a retweet as someone forwarding an e-mail to their friends because they want their friends to read the content as well. The more retweets you have, the more engaging and interesting your content is perceived to be. If your content rarely gets retweeted, it’s time to reevaluate your content and make it more relevant to couples.
3. **New followers.** Follower growth occurs at different rates for different organizations. However, a good way to gain followers on Twitter is by following a lot of like-minded organizations and individuals—many of these will reciprocate by following your organization. Try using a service like WeFollow.com to find people with similar interests.
4. **Klout score.** A Klout score is a measure of influence—whether your tweets drive people to action. Knowing your Klout score will help you figure out if your profile is currently succeeding as a recruitment tool. After about three months of consistent social media use, find your organization’s Klout score at www.klout.com.
5. **Monthly growth percentage (followers).** Focusing on the percentage of growth (rather than the raw follower count) may be a more meaningful measure of progress.

6. **Monthly clicks.** If you're sharing links on Twitter, it is important to monitor how many of your followers are clicking through to the actual content. If no one is clicking on your links, reexamine the language accompanying your tweets and make it more dynamic.

YouTube – To make tracking statistics easier, YouTube has an [insight feature](#) that allows you to quickly grab detailed data for your account (such as the number of videos uploaded). Evaluate the number of comments you receive. You will also want to consider:

1. **Subscribers.** Subscribers are people who are notified whenever your organization uploads a new video.
2. **Views per video.** It's difficult to determine how many views a particular video should get. The number of views depends on a variety of factors: promotion, the length of the video (shorter is better), etc. But organizations starting out may want to aim for 100 views per video.
3. **Video content.** Select video content that will attract the most attention, such as clips of couples resolving a conflict. Including footage of a workshop session allows past participants to easily spread the word about their experience to their friends and family.

Blogs – Blogs can be the linchpin of your social media strategy. Once you have a robust blog in place, you will be able to reuse most of your content on other social media sites. Stay aware of the comments you receive on your blog and respond to them all (this is important since 90 percent of people who view blogs read them without posting anything). Most blogging platforms provide statistics about the blog, making it easy to adjust your strategy as data indicates.

1. **Posts.** A regularly updated blog draws visitors in and gives them a reason to come back for more. Aim for at least one blog post per week.
2. **Page views.** This statistic tells you how many people visited your blog. The more you promote your content on other platforms, the higher this number will be.
3. **Referrers.** Referrers are the websites people visited right before they came to your blog. If you are just starting out, your most popular referrer might be your own website. As your content grows, you will find more people linking to your blog from other websites.
4. **Most popular post.** From time to time, organizations should analyze their most popular content. What do the top three posts have in common? Length, subject matter, multimedia content, etc.? Try to understand what your audience responds to so you can give them more of this type of content.

A successful social media strategy doesn't have to be particularly time-intensive—repurpose content you already have or use external content from sources you already follow. With so many tools available to study and track your efforts, you can continually monitor your progress and make adjustments to your social media strategy.

The National Healthy Marriage Resource Center (NHMRC) would like to thank Tara Pringle Jefferson, a freelance writer and a social media consultant, for her contributions to this Tip Sheet. This is a product of the NHMRC, led by co-directors Mary Myrick, APR, and Jeanette Hercik, PhD, and project manager Rich Batten, ThM, MEd, CFLE.