Lesson Plan

Avenues to Advocacy: Social Media

“The Internet, in particular, offers immense possibilities for encounter and solidarity. This is something truly good, a gift from God.”

—Pope Francis

Length:
1 hour

Objectives:
Through this activity participants will:
• Gain tips and best practices to advocate effectively using social media.
• Take the next step by putting those tips into action.

Materials:
• Social Media: Getting Involved handout
• Social Media Resources handout

Preparation:
For the brainstorming portion of the activity, check out the CCGP Action Center (confrontglobalpoverty.org/get-involved/action-center/) and current news items. Have some ideas about recent social media campaigns that advocated for legislative or political change.
**Process:**

**Brainstorm**

Have participants brainstorm and then list recent social media campaigns related to issues of social justice, and advocating for specific legal change or calling attention to a problem.

Congressional offices are using social media to help gauge public opinion, augmenting traditional tools used for that purpose. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of senior managers and social media managers surveyed think Facebook is a “somewhat or very important tool for understanding constituents’ views and opinions,” 42% say Twitter is “somewhat or very important,” and 34% say YouTube is “somewhat or very important.” As few as 30 comments can attract the attention of a representative.

**Social Media: Getting Involved**

Distribute the *Social Media: Getting Involved* handout

*For more information about how social media is taken into account by congressional offices, see congressfoundation.org/projects/communicating-with-congress/social-congress*

**Homework:**

Have participants take the next step by using their social media accounts to advocate for a cause. Instruct participants to print a screenshot of their post, tweet, etc. Participants who are not on Facebook or Twitter can use alternative platforms (Instagram a photo, comment on a blog, or share an email alert).
Handout

Social Media: Getting Involved

How can social media be used to advocate successfully for real change to societal problems?

• Look for an existing community around an issue or cause. Like, retweet or use a popular hashtag in your own tweet.
• Take your message further by directing a tweet or a Facebook post at your congressional representatives asking them to take specific action about a legal issue. Always be polite and thank them!

**Congressional senior managers and social media managers say...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facebook is somewhat or very important to understanding constituents’ opinions</th>
<th>Twitter is somewhat or very important to understanding constituents’ opinions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>64%</td>
<td>42%</td>
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**TO GET STARTED** If you don’t already have a Facebook or Twitter, sign up for an account, and ask a friend to show you some of the basics. You can also check out many “how to” videos online.

**IF YOU’RE ALREADY ON SOCIAL MEDIA** Follow some new accounts—especially those of your congressional representatives and news sources publishing information about issues you care about. Check out our list of social media resources to follow.

On **TWITTER**, follow the accounts of journalists, news sources, advocacy organizations, celebrities or community leaders who are involved in an issue. Through these accounts, or by exploring the trending hashtags page, you can find ongoing advocacy movements connected. From there, you can retweet other people’s messages or use the hashtag/phrase in your own tweet. Tweet often, and at different times of the day!
FACEBOOK is useful for longer posts, which you should limit to once or twice a day. Raise online awareness by liking or sharing someone else’s relevant post. Sharing a news article is a great way to catch people’s attention, especially if you personalize your post to highlight how the issue is relevant to your friends. Always use pictures in your post!

While Twitter and Facebook are most commonly used for advocacy because of the ability to re-post other people’s messages and send many messages out, there are many other platforms. Consider whether a Tumblr blog, post on Instagram, video on YouTube, or another platform would be effective, too.

Always make your messages personal, and let people know why YOU are so passionate. Be direct and to the point. Put your passion into practice! Find an ongoing campaign advocating for an issue. Consider which platform is most appropriate and like, share or tweet!

Sample Tweet about Syrian Crisis:

Tragic milestone: there are over 5 million Syrian refugees. Half are children. Hurry. #SurroundSyriansWithSupport @CatholicRelief @USCCB
Handout
Social Media Resources

**Catholic Relief Services** ([crs.org](http://crs.org))
Follow us on [Facebook](http://facebook.com) and receive breaking reports from our CRS humanitarian workers around the world, field updates and international news. Our general Twitter feed is @CatholicRelief.

**United States Conference of Catholic Bishops** ([usccb.org](http://usccb.org))
Support the ministry of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) striving to promote the greater good that the Church offers humankind; stay connected with the USCCB on [Facebook](http://facebook.com) and Twitter (@USCCB). You can follow the USCCB Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development (JPHD) on their blog, [ToGoForth](http://togoforth.org).

**Poverty USA** ([povertyusa.org](http://povertyusa.org))
Poverty USA is an initiative of the USCCB's Catholic Campaign for Human Development; you can find Poverty USA on [Facebook](http://facebook.com) and follow them on Twitter (@EndPovertyUSA).

**CRS Fair Trade** ([crsfairtrade.org](http://crsfairtrade.org))
Catholic Relief Services Fair Trade helps Catholics live their faith in solidarity with farmers and artisans through purchases of fair trade crafts, coffee, and chocolate. Follow them on Twitter (@CRSFairTrade), like their [Facebook page](http://facebook.com), follow them on [Pinterest](http://pinterest.com), subscribe to their [YouTube Channel](http://youtube.com), and read their [blog](http://blog.crs.org)!

**CRS Rice Bowl** ([crsricebowl.org](http://crsricebowl.org))
CRS Rice Bowl is Catholic Relief Services’ Lenten faith-in-action program for families and faith communities. Follow them on Twitter (@CRSRiceBowl) and like their [Facebook page](http://facebook.com).
USCCB Action Center ([votervoice.net/USCCB/campaigns](votervoice.net/USCCB/campaigns))
Sign up to receive USCCB Action Alerts! The USCCB Action Center contains advocacy tools, and helps you take effective actions on a variety of issues by giving you access to an advocate network, helping you to communicate with elected officials, and providing you with information about targeted efforts.

Justice for Immigrants ([justiceforimmigrants.org/index.shtml](justiceforimmigrants.org/index.shtml))
USCCB’s Justice for Immigrants (JFI) educates the public, especially Catholics, about Church teaching on migration and immigrants. JFI also works to create political will for positive immigration reform, enact legislative reforms based on the principles articulated by the bishops, and organize Catholic networks to assist qualified immigrants obtain the benefits of reforms. Like their Facebook page, follow them on Twitter (@USCCBJFI), and sign up for their mailing list!

WeAreSaltAndLight.org
This new project developed by the USCCB’s Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development helps Catholics pray, reach out, learn and act together to create vibrant communities transformed by the Holy Spirit and living the Gospel. The website features videos, resources, and stories of communities around the United States living out the call to be salt and light. Like them on Facebook and follow them on Twitter (@WeAreSaltLight).