

SOCIETY OPERATIONS: MARKETING, COMMUNICATIONS & PUBLICITY In the 21st Century

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We have lived in the 21st century for 20+ years – so why are we still using 10th century tools?

How do we get everyone involved, participants as well as members of the leadership team?

[Late-breaking information and copies of slides will be made available during presentation]

TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

- What is “publicity” all about?
- How do we market our society?
- Marketing & Communications vehicles:
 - Websites
 - Online calendars & meeting organizers
 - Virtual meetings
 - Electronic newsletters and mailings
 - Event publicity, registration & coordination
 - Electronic forms, polls & information gathering

GETTING THE WORD OUT

- Other Local Organizations with Similar Missions
 - Genealogy Societies in Adjacent Counties
 - Local Historical Societies
 - Educational Programs and Institutions
 - Libraries
- MEETUP.COM

- FaceBook – Groups as well as Pages
- Society Websites Come in All Sizes
- Email blasts

STAYING IN TOUCH WITH YOUR MEMBERS

- Email Announcements
 - Society Activities (Meetings & other Events)
 - Relevant “Breaking News” Bulletins
- Newsletters
 - Society News
 - Events Calendar
 - Educational Articles
 - External Events
 - Postings from Society Leadership
- Social Events, Tours, etc.

HOW CAN TECHNOLOGY HELP, ESPECIALLY IN THE CURRENT ENVIRONMENT?

- Email has to be the answer – “push” information to your members
- Internet / Website – allow members and the public to “pull” information from you
- Social media – widen the scope of your Internet presence
- Meetup.com – use their networking capabilities to extend your reach to people you would not otherwise make contact with, on their own terms
- “Virtual” meetings – who hasn’t been using Zoom these days? Accept and embrace this technology, use to your own advantage
- Hold more events than you did in the past – no more meeting venues that need to be scheduled and paid for!
- Electronic forms and polling – find out just what your membership and attendees want from the society. Google Forms is free!

GETTING THE WORD OUT TO PEOPLE YOU DON’T KNOW ABOUT

- MEETUP.COM – their network of members is vast, and they understand what topics their members are interested in. Weekly emails oriented towards telling people about “meetups” in their geographic vicinity in subject areas they haven’t “checked off”. Meetup keeps the contact information private, which gives a lot of people comfort. Great way to keep your calendar online for members and non-members to view

- FaceBook – you need to be diligent about spreading the word among everyone own FB network – not sufficient to just post something to your society’s FB page, your members need to pass on the information to all of their own FB friends. Another great tool for keeping people aware of near-term events, with links to additional details and possible registration information.
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WEBSITES

- this is how the outside world can find detailed information about your society, not just publicity releases. They can understand what you have to offer them, use resources that you make available, and understand what benefits they will receive as members.
- Websites can be simple (many small groups only use Meetup.com), or full function (with online stores for handling memberships, event registration, book purchases, etc). There are a lot of “in-between” sizes for websites. Start at what you are comfortable with, then grow into what you need. See resources such as WildApricot, WordPress, etc.
- Domain Names – this is the YourSociety.org address that the world will use to find you on the internet. Always be sure to register your domain in a separate account and, if possible, a separate company, that where your website is hosted – even if the website hosting company provides the registration for “free.” Common registrars are GoDaddy and NameCheap. Search “ICANN registrars” to get the lists of official Domain registrars.

ZOOM

- Zoom has become the defacto platform for online meetings and communications. No cost to users, low cost to societies. For most societies, a single host is all they need to handle monthly meetings, special group meetings, administrative meetings, and conferences.
- Features such as polls and breakout rooms are especially useful for creating highly functional events. Holding periodic “round table” events where members bring their research problems to the group for discussion are amazingly effective ways of using breakout rooms. Similar events with breakout rooms based on specific research topics emulate a physical event where each table has an expert assigned and a sign telling people what topic is discussed there. Polls are excellent for easily determining early on in a meeting whether the audience’s experience in a research topic matches the speaker’s expectation.
- Chat facility provides a means of “social interaction” between participants, as well as a way for knowledgeable attendees to enhance the presentation by responding to questions without interrupting the speaker. Zoom saves the chat dialog for future reference makes it a great tool for mining the conversations for future meeting topics.
- Recording – Zoom takes the pain out of recording – now you can build up a library of recorded talks on topics that will help your members in their research. Zoom does the heavy lifting, and for a small fee they will take care of storing those recording in the Cloud.

GETTING FEEDBACK FROM YOUR MEMBERS

- SurveyMonkey is popular, but you need to be aware of the limitations of their free service – you will not have very useful access to the underlying data collected
- GoogleForms is very easy to use, provides a lot of flexibility both in look & feel of the survey as well as the types of questions and complexity of the survey. Simple conditional logic is available, which allows you to ask certain questions only of people that answer another question with a specific answer. All of the data collected is stored in a GoogleSheet, so your ability to analyze it beyond the charts and graphs provided by GoogleForms is virtually endless
- WordPress – there are more “survey” plugins for WordPress than can be counted, so follow the usual advice and use one that shows a high number of active users and current release dates for updates.
- Eventbrite – Along with the rest of its great capabilities for managing events and meetings, it also provides the ability to add questions that are answered by people when they purchase a ticket (even if it is a no-cost ticket). You can collect information such as “how did you hear about us” or “what would you like to see for future lectures”. You can specify whether the answer is required or optional. All information comes back to you in a spreadsheet with the rest of the attendee information.

RESOURCES TO HELP

- NGS Private FaceBook Groups:
 - Genealogical Society Webmasters
 - NGS Society and Organization Leaders Forum
- GenSocSoup
- Google is your friend! Information on technologies such as WordPress and WildApricot, using Eventbrite, meetup.com, etc.
- Meetup.com generic webinars – they hold many meetings oriented towards groups just starting in the online meeting world, and specific types of groups such as non-profits. The first step is to sign up for a meetup account and give it a try for one six-month billing cycle.
- Check OGS 2021 session “Society Membership management – A little TLC Goes a Long Way” for a more in-depth discussion of this related area of society management