Developing a Multimedia Strategy

How to engage members using print, the Internet and new media communication tools.
Driving membership using digital media
Best practices for post, district and department webmasters and editors in a fast-changing world of media.

DIGITAL MEDIA OVERVIEW

An effective website is the foundation
Think of your post’s website as a digital filing cabinet. It hosts information about your post and media such as photos, videos and downloadable documents. All other forms of media drive traffic to your site.

Before you start

Define your audience
- Loyal members
- Members at risk
- Non-members but eligible to become members
- Non-members, non-eligible with affinity to the Legion

Determine your content
- Static content, never changing information about the Legion
- Occasionally changing content, Legacy run information, calendar
- Frequently changing content, news from Washington, D.C.
- Downloads such as prepared speeches, membership pamphlets

Create E-newsletters
E-mail marketing reaches a wide audience in a short period of time and allows members to immediately act on messages.

Campaigns can be implemented and executed with minimal software, hardware and personnel investments.

Use Social Media
Social media has played a big role with how people interact with each other and it is not slowing down anytime soon.

People like to feel like they are a part of something unique and special.

Community strength is a very powerful branding force that can significantly grow your post on and offline.

Move toward mobile
The smartphone market is already huge, but things are expected to get even bigger in the coming years.
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DEVELOP AN EFFECTIVE WEBSITE

Five main steps when building a website

The type of website you need depends on how you run your post and the goals you have. These are the general steps when creating a post’s website.

Host
You pay for a specific amount of space, software and other services.
Examples: GoDaddy, HostMonster, BlueHost or Yahoo.

Domain
Keep it simple and easy to remember -- www.post55.org.
Try to keep it to the shortest name your members can associate with.

Plan
Decide what type of site you’ll have -- news/info, product, or reference sites.
Each has a different focus. Sketch your navigation and content accordingly.

Build
Be familiar with design basics, HTML and CSS.
Using site editors such as Front Page or Dreamweaver help but eventually, you’ll have to get into code.

Publish
You can do this with either the tools that come with your hosting service or with FTP software.
Knowing which you can use depends upon your hosting provider.

Legionsites.com
Legionsites.com is a convenient place to get started when building a post website. Their product includes all five steps in one location as well as approved logos and icons.

They are affordable, easy to use and provide excellent customer service.

http://www.legionsites.com

Maintenance

The hardest and most boring part of running a website is maintaining it. However, it’s necessary in order to keep members engaged and able to access information more easily.

Maintenance includes: Adding new content, monitoring outages, checking broken links, software updates, analyzing traffic, creating user polls and increasing search engine results.
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E - N E W S L E T T E R S

Why E-mail?

The American Legion Magazine Division sends the Online Update e-newsletter every Thursday to more than 450,000 e-mail addresses. It’s the single biggest traffic source to Legion.org next to Google.

Legion.org page views

AUGUST 2012 TO 2013

Subject line is key

Most often, respondents decide to open an email after reading the subject line. You should spend almost twice as much time reviewing your subject line compared with reviewing the body of your email.

Top American Legion e-newsletters

Examples of what to include in a post e-newsletter.

Online Update
Includes news stories, video features and advance notices that relate to veterans affairs.
More than 450,000 subscribers weekly

Half-Staff Flag
Provides an e-mail notification when the U.S. flag is to be displayed at half-staff.
More than 40,000 subscribers

Legion Riders
Info on ALR updates and links to external media about what Rider chapters are doing across the country.
More than 15,000 subscribers monthly

Legislative
Lets readers in on the legislative topics of the week -- bills in Congress that affect issues such as veterans benefits.
More than 14,000 subscribers weekly

Digital Dispatch
Aimed at Legion leadership. It includes links to member incentive programs and forums on making posts successful.
More than 11,000 subscribers monthly

Visit www.legion.org/newsletters to get a complete list or sign-up
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SOCIAL MEDIA OVERVIEW

What is Social Media?

Think of regular media as a one-way street where you can read a newspaper or watch a report on television. This form of media gives you limited ability to interact or share your own thoughts.

Social media, on the other hand, is a two-way street. It gives you the ability to communicate too. Social media is a way to interact with other users by sharing opinions and content such as photos.

Types

**Blogs** are perhaps the best known form of social media -- online diaries. [www.burnpit.legion.org](http://www.burnpit.legion.org)

**Microblogging** is social networking combined with bite-sized blogging. Twitter is microblogging. [@AmericanLegion](https://twitter.com/AmericanLegion)

**Content communities** organize and share particular kinds of content. YouTube is a content community.

**Social networks** allow you to build personal web pages then connect with friends. Facebook is the best known social network.

**Forums** are areas for online discussion, often around specific topics and interests.

Characteristics

Participation encourages contributions from everyone blurring the line between media and audience.

Openness encourages voting, comments and the sharing of information.

Conversation allows you to be part of a two-way exchange of ideas and opinions.

Community joins you with other people who share common interests, such as a love of photography, a political issue or a favorite TV show.

Connectedness is what most kinds of social media thrive on, making use of links to other sites, resources and people.

Legion on Facebook

The Legion has expanded its presence onto various social network sites, especially Facebook. Become a part of the Legion family, stay updated on vital news and to get your voices heard.

[www.legion.org/facebook](http://www.legion.org/facebook)
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MOBILE TECHNOLOGY

Why mobile?

New data suggests worldwide smartphone shipments will hit 1.5 billion by 2017. That’s more than double the number of smartphones that shipped last year.

What’s the difference between a mobile website and an app?

Both apps and mobile websites are accessed on handheld devices such as smartphones (e.g. iPhone, Android and Blackberry) and tablets.

Mobile website

A mobile website is similar to any other website. However, a mobile site is designed for the smaller handheld display and touch-screen interface.

Like any website, mobile websites can display text content, data, images and video. They can also access mobile-specific features such as click-to-call (to dial a phone number) or location-based mapping.

Mobile app

Apps are actual applications that are downloaded from portals such as Apple’s App Store, Android Market or Blackberry App World and installed on your mobile device, rather than being viewed within a browser.

The app may pull content and data from the Internet, in similar fashion to a website, or it may download the content so that it can be accessed without an Internet connection.

Legion Apps

The Claims Coach provides step-by-step guidance to help you and your service officer through the process of filing for VA benefits.

The Sons of The Legion app provides, news stories, video features and advance notices that relate to the SAL.

www.legion.org/mobileapps