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Nonprofits credit social media for success

MomsRising and charity: water have accomplished much in a short time. Here are some tips on how they did it, with the effective use of social media.

by [Edie Gross](#)



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Want to know what difference social media can make for a nonprofit organization? Look no further than [charity: water](#) and [MomsRising](#). The two are often cited as among the most creative and effective users of social media in the nonprofit world.

Created just five years ago, both have accomplished much in a short time. Powered by 500 bloggers and 1.1 million members, MomsRising has racked up a string of policy and legislative victories for families and children. And charity: water, with more than 200,000 Facebook fans and 1.4 million Twitter followers, has raised \$40 million to support 4,282 water projects in 19 countries.

Both credit social media for a large part of their success. Here are tips from each:

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MomsRising

- **Listen to constituents.** MomsRising looks to constituents for guidance on which issues to address. It pays close attention to its social media channels and periodically surveys members to find out what issues are priorities for them.
- **Use multiple social media channels.** Give people a variety of ways to keep track of your organization's activities, and make sure communications go two ways. MomsRising's 17,000 Facebook fans, 14,000 Twitter followers and 3.5 million blog readers all have the ability to weigh in and affect the organization's direction.
- **Offer multiple ways to participate.** Give people the ability to act and make a difference. MomsRising offers many ways to participate, including online petitions, meetings with legislators, testimony before Congress, videos and more.
- **Establish measurable goals.** MomsRising monitors a variety of indicators, including membership, government policies enacted, media coverage and partnerships, and holds a weekly staff meeting to analyze how it's doing.
- **Pursue partnerships.** MomsRising doesn't try to reinvent the wheel. The group partners with about 150 other advocacy groups to push for policies.
- **Be willing to experiment ... and to fail.** Very few things soar. Most move forward incrementally. And some fail miserably. That's OK. If you have no failures, you're probably not doing a good job, because you're not testing and exploring.

charity: water

- **Keep the message simple.** charity: water has a very simple message: 1 billion people don't have clean drinking water, and \$20 can change that for one person. It takes a complex problem and makes it something anyone can help solve.
- **Share stories to inspire.** charity: water uses social media to tell about people who benefit from the clean-water projects and people who raise money for those projects. Inspiration is the most important part of a digital charity; stories inspire and connect.
- **Be transparent.** Anyone can track the money raised and spent by charity: water. Annual reports and other financial information are posted on the website. Donors can also see the project they funded, with photos and GPS coordinates on Google Maps.
- **Keep it personal.** mycharitywater.org enables fans to launch and publicize their own fundraising efforts, and the nonprofit also recognizes and thanks donors.
- **Network.** charity: water partners with 25 local organizations that know how to build and sustain water projects in the communities they serve. The partnerships allow charity: water to focus on bringing clean water to developing countries without having to become a large bureaucracy.