



*Social Media: 6 New Things Animal Organizations
Need to Know*
Live Webcast Audience Questions and Answers
By Christie Keith
May 8, 2014

1) Q: How can a shelter work around Facebook's new algorithm and not have to pay to promote posts?

A: Right now, you can do so by following the practices laid out in the webcast: Keep a close eye on your Insights to see what works on your page in terms of engagement. Stop posting so much and focus on participating in conversations with your followers in the comments section on existing posts. Don't do the things Facebook says hurt engagement, such as asking for likes, comments shares, and posting content that is already being widely shared. Don't share other people's content to your page. And use lots of really good photos.

In the long run, you may not be able to get any reach at all without paying, so you should at the same time be looking at ways to make your website more social-friendly with share buttons and a standalone page for each pet as well as fundraising pleas. Also, keep an eye on other social media platforms and explore if any of them will work to achieve your organization's goals, because the "free ride" on Facebook is coming to an end – unless they develop a nonprofit program.

2) Q: Should all postings by others on Facebook be reposted in order to be seen better?

A: If you want them to be seen by your followers, you have to repost them.

3) Q: Should we routinely boost posts on Facebook as part of our advertising budget?

A: It's impossible to answer whether or not you should pay to promote your posts without more information about your goals. However, don't use the "boost" feature on the posts. Go to facebook.com/ads and use the ad interface to create a Page Post Engagement ad. You'll have much better targeting options and thus, your ads will cost you less for better results.

4) Q: What's the best (hopefully free) way to use Facebook apps to personalize a rescue Facebook page? (i.e., putting links for fundraising page, Amazon wish list, etc., on the front of the page next to the "likes" and "photos" links).

A: None of those things matters much, as almost no one will ever visit your page. As long as the page looks nice, and your information is accurate and up to date, you're fine.

5) **Q: How often should a humane society/animal shelter post to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.?**

A: You should definitely look at your analytics on Facebook to determine whether or not more or less frequent posting will work for you, but I'd start with 1-2 posts a day, one at noon local time and one at around 8 pm local time. On Twitter, there's no absolute rule, but if you post too close together, people do get annoyed. I'd try to keep the quality of your posts high – NEVER automate content! You can schedule it, but create the Tweets specifically for Twitter – and leave a good half hour or more between Tweets. Instagram will forgive you almost anything if the quality of your photos is high enough, but I'd still leave a good half hour between posts, or more.

6) **Q: We've seen that Facebook posts without photos don't get looked at...should we not bother unless we have a photo?**

A: Honestly? Yes. At least for now.

7) **Q: What is your opinion on the effectiveness of happy photos vs. urgency/heartbreaking photos?**

A: I don't believe it's wise to use urgency/heartbreaking photos on a Facebook page that faces the general public (as opposed to a closed group) unless you are a shelter reform group. For pet adoption and general shelter or rescue group recruitment of donors, volunteers, etc., positive will work best.

8) **Q: Can't you just copy and paste any link on Facebook?**

A: Technically, of course. It's unfortunately not necessarily your best way to get engagement and views.

9) **Q: What do you think about Livestream for adoptable pets?**

A: I think it's a good thing to try, and if you're getting good results, keep doing it!

10) **Q: Do you recommend something like Hoot Suite as a platform for multiple social media outlets?**

A: Just for Twitter. It's not a good tool for Google+ or Facebook. I use it for Twitter constantly! They also have a great blog.

11) **Q: Is it better to comment on your own status rather than post a new status on Facebook?**

A: It depends. If there is a conversation going on, if people are still commenting in the last half hour or so, if reach is still growing -- yes. If the post has been dead for a couple of hours, no. Better to realize that one didn't work and move on.

12) Q: Does Facebook use third party companies to like and interact with paid Facebook page advertising?

A: No, they don't.

13) Q: If we create a flyer with pictures and text on a specific animal looking for a new foster/home will Facebook penalize for that?

A: Yes, assuming their algorithm detects the text.

14) Q: Does it matter how OFTEN you post like bait, or is each time treated like an offense, even if it's occasional?

A: There will be a reduction of reach each time you post it, if it's detected, and this will take time to wear off.

15) Q: What are the Facebook penalties you are mentioning and why?

A: They show your post to fewer people. It is an automated process, not a penalty per se. And that reduction in reach will lower your engagement, which will in turn signal to the algorithm that it should reduce your reach further.

16) Q: I'm a little confused. Facebook is not showing all my followers my posts?

A: Correct. They have not shown all your followers your posts for more than 2 years now. Two years ago it was around 25 percent on average; now it's around 6 percent or less.

17) Q: How are you staying on top of the changes in Facebook? Are there sites or blogs you're following to stay on top of the changes and trends?

A: Absolutely! I mentioned them in the webcast and they're also listed in the Resources, right at the top of this page:

<http://www.maddiesfund.org/Documents/Institute/Social%20Media%206%20New%20Things%20Website%20Resources.pdf>

18) Q: For adding photos of animals, do you recommend an individual album for each animal, or would you recommend creating albums with groups of adoptable animals?

A: No, albums are performing poorly right now. You can post multiple photos to a post without creating an album, but single photos still perform the best.

19) Q: I know one organization that went from 200 followers to over 45k followers because she posts all the time. She tells the story of her animals and if 15 animals come in, she posts them all. If we can't post a lot, how do we increase our followers?

A: The changes to Facebook's algorithm were recent, and things that worked for us even a few months ago may no longer work.

The real question you should ask is not, "How do we increase our followers?", but "How can Facebook help us achieve our organizational goals?"

With organic reach as low as it is, and falling lower, it may well be that you have no reason to get more followers. However, if you do, then you should have contests, promote your page on your website and in your email newsletters, and consider running a paid "like" campaign.

20) Q: What about answering messages? Does that help?

A: No, but it's nice to do. 😊

21) Q: What happens if your site is "flagged" by Facebook

A: You will get a message telling you what the problem is and how to fix it.

22) Q: Are comments by many people as good as page admin replying to each?

A: Absolutely!

23) Q: We should be removing our address now if we don't have an actual shelter, etc.?

A: Definitely!

24) Q: What about videos - are they as important as photos?

A: They are important but do not perform as well as photos at this time, at least on the pages I manage.

25) Q: What times are posts best reached on Facebook if you want to post twice a day?

A: Start at noon local time and 8 PM local time, then monitor performance and see what works for your page.

26) Q: How important is it to have a consistent "voice" on our social media page?

A: It's important for brands, probably less important for a shelter or rescue group.

27) Q: On Facebook is it best to add an update under a photo (such as this dog has been adopted) or create a separate post about it?

A: I would make an update if your goal is to let people know the pet has been adopted, but better yet would be to make a brand new post making a really big deal about the adoption to make people happy. Use a great photo of the pet with his new family.

28) Q: How do you manage all different social media platforms? Do you cross post the same content?

A: I tailor my content for each platform, but often, it's similar. But I don't just copy and paste.

29) Q: What is the difference between like and follow on Facebook pages? Do people need to pick both?

A: You can't "follow" a page. You can only "like" a page. You can "follow" an individual person's profile by "liking" it if they don't like you back.

30) Q: Should we use hashtags on twitter?

A: Yes, but sparingly and appropriately. There are resources about this here: <http://www.maddiesfund.org/Documents/Institute/Social%20Media%206%20New%20Things%20Website%20Resources.pdf>

31) Q: What's the best way to use Facebook and Twitter together? I know there are ways to post to one and have it automatically post to both. Does this really work for exposure?

A: No, this is a TERRIBLE idea. The platforms are different. Don't link them!

32) Q: Re: Pinterest... how do you make sure that animal pictures are taken down once they're adopted?

A: I wouldn't.

33) Q: I heard on Twitter this week that Google+ actually has more activity (actual engagement, genuine comments) than Twitter. Yet all of Google+'s staff has been reallocated. Would you recommend using Google+?

A: I recommend maintaining a Google+ presence for search engine optimization purposes. Google+ as a social network may be going away (no one knows for sure), but Google itself has integrated all its platforms through Google+, and that will still remain. A post a week is enough – and make sure your website is linked to your G+ account! You can read how to do that in the Resources:

<http://www.maddiesfund.org/Documents/Institute/Social%20Media%206%20New%20Things%20Website%20Resources.pdf>

34) Q: We have very limited resources to be posting on tons of social media sites, plus keeping our website updated. What social media would you recommend as the top two?

A: Facebook and Twitter.

35) Q: What if you only do local adoptions? Is it worthwhile creating a hiking board to promote your rescue?

A: Sure! You want people to share your pins, and their followers probably do include people local to you!

36) Q: Do you know how visibility is affected when you share a post that was posted to your page? i.e., an adopter goes to your Facebook page and posts a picture of an adopted animal in their home and you in turn share it on your page.

A: The “credit” for that photo will go to the poster, not you.

37) Q: Our rescue has been using a volunteer professional photographer. Do you recommend professional photos for adoptable animals?

A: I do, but it’s not essential as long as the photos are good, clear, and focus on the pet’s personality and face.

38) Q: Can you explain what feedly.com is?

A: It is a site that gathers up posts made to different blogs and websites so you can read them all in one place, easily and quickly.

39) Q: What is the most effective platform for requesting help for pets facing euthanasia in a short period of time?

A: A closed Facebook group with a dedicated group of rescuers in it, or personal profiles.

40) Q: What about posting a picture of an animal that was attacked by another animal that needs medical care. We want to spread awareness in our area about the way people treat dogs and make them dangerous in our efforts to create an activist group.

A: I tend to be skeptical about “creating awareness.” To what end? What is your tangible goal – to get people to show up at a public hearing? To donate money? To vote for a new regulation or law? To replace a shelter employee?

Without a clear idea of the goal, “raising awareness” is not going to accomplish anything. That’s the first question that needs to be answered, and then you can ask if the photo furthers that goal, and how.

41) Q: How do you suggest that pages for shelters that euthanize stress that the pets are truly in danger without being too negative/heartbreaking?

A: They will adopt more pets if they don’t focus on that. They think by increasing the guilt factor they’ll attract more people, but the fact is they won’t. They should have a Facebook group for rescuers, and do positive adoptions on their Facebook page and other social media.

42) Q: When I re-pin photos on Pinterest, do I need to worry about violating copyrights?

A: If it’s a re-pin, you don’t need to worry about legal ramifications, but if you are pretty sure it’s not okay, you should not re-pin out of courtesy to the creator.