

GAgives on #GivingTuesday Social Media Guide

GAgives on #GivingTuesday is a movement borne out of and fueled by social media. Created as a response to both the decadence of Thanksgiving and the overt consumerism of Black Friday and Cyber Monday, **GAgives on #GivingTuesday** challenges people to use social media for good and crack open their wallets to help their communities instead of buying *stuff*. So, to make GAgives work for your nonprofit, you're going to have to harness the power of social media.



In this guide, we'll discuss strategy, tips, and best practices for using social media for GAgives on #GivingTuesday.

Content development

The first thing your nonprofit needs to do to get a jump on #GivingTuesday is create content. To optimize your social media marketing and drive traffic to your GAgives.org page, here's what you'll need:

Video: A video could be the difference between a successful day and a ho-hum day. That's because videos, in addition to giving your nonprofit a bold and impactful way to make your case for donating on #GivingTuesday, perform well on social media. Facebook's algorithm *loves* videos and prioritizes them in users' feeds. That means you'll get more organic (*unpaid*) reach and more bang for your buck if you pay to advertise. You don't need a film crew and a huge budget to make a compelling video: In many cases, all you need is a smartphone and some free video editing tools like YouTube Editor or [Kizoa](#). It's also the perfect opportunity to engage a volunteer videographer: Put a call out on social media, or have your volunteer coordinator do some legwork to find a capable volunteer who can help you create a video.

Photos: Across all social media platforms, photos perform better than text or links alone. To grab users' attention and keep it throughout #GivingTuesday, you'll need to gather photos that tell the story of your work.

Share graphics: A "share graphic" is an image that works to drive engagement on social media. The purpose of share graphics is to inspire and encourage shares, retweets, and regrams, driving traffic to both your social media accounts and your

GAgives.org page. The thing to keep in mind with share graphics: what will inspire your audience to share them. Consider what your followers might be interested in sharing with their friends, and what a graphic would say about them to others. You can keep it simple by creating graphics with text overlays ([Canva](#) is a great tool for this) or you can kick it up a notch by working with a graphic designer to create an infographic ([Fiverr](#) is a great place to find graphic designers who will create one-off pieces at a low cost).

Testimonials: Testimonials are important to nonprofit fundraising because they show the human impact of the work you do, and give the public stories they can personally relate to. A story illustrating how your nonprofit helped someone in need is much more powerful than numbers or statistics. You'll want to collect testimonials to use for GAgives on #GivingTuesday in a variety of ways – videos, share graphics, link/text posts, and photos. Do some digging to pinpoint stories that might make good testimonials and start reaching out.

Some of this content requires a fair amount of time to put together, so you'll want to give yourself plenty of lead time to gather and build them. They will be important tools to drive traffic to your GAgives.org page and engage your audience, so it's worth taking the extra time to make sure you've got thoughtful, high-quality content that your supporters will want to share.

Social media strategy for GAgives on #GivingTuesday

There is an overwhelming number of social media platforms available, and new ones are popping up all the time. (Remember when your nonprofit finally got the hang of creating Vines, only for them to be discontinued and replaced by Snapchat?) Instead of detailing each and every platform you *could* use for GAgives, we'll discuss strategies that can be applied to the platforms of your choice.

Use your time and energy wisely. Take a look at your online audience. Where is your online community most active? Where do you have the most followers? That's where you'll want to direct most of your energy. If your biggest and most engaged audience is on Twitter, reach out there. Don't expend energy trying to figure out something that's never proven effective before – stick with what works!

Play to win. The nonprofits that show up at the top of the leaderboards year after year all have something in common: They focus on winning. These organizations promote a particular Power Hour and urge their followers to help them win prizes. They schedule their heavy-hitting content for key time periods. They pay attention to when their donors

tend to donate (you can see this information on your donations report) and post to social media accordingly.

Stack the deck in your favor this year by getting familiar with the prizes available, and make sure your supporters know what's at stake, too. Ask for their help winning prizes. Don't worry about detracting from your message by talking about prizes and leaderboards: Your supporters *want to help you*, and will be happy to make their donation during a time that maximizes its value.

Set aside a budget for advertising. Social media advertising is inexpensive and surprisingly powerful. For a fraction of the cost of a print ad, you can reach thousands of users on social media. How much your nonprofit spends on advertising is up to you and your budget, but we highly recommend setting aside *some* money for advertising on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. (Tip: You can create ads for Facebook and Instagram simultaneously through [Facebook Ads Manager](#).) Here's what we suggest:

- **Boost posts:** On Facebook, you can strategically pay to boost your posts, giving them more reach. Pay to boost your heavy-hitting content on #GivingTuesday to make a greater impact. Even \$10-\$15 can help your post reach thousands more people than it would organically.
- **Create pre-#GivingTuesday ads:** Let people know you're participating this year and build hype for your campaign with ads leading up to the big day! You could get creative before the event and run an ad with a link to a GAgives page on your website where you tease your campaign and encourage people to sign up for emails.
- **Target your ads:** Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram all provide free targeting tools so you can make sure the ads you're paying for reach the people you want to see them. Make sure you understand how to use these tools, and check that your ads are reaching the right people.

Internal tactics for social media success

Just because social media is fun doesn't mean that managing it is easy: It's a real job, and it can be a fairly stressful one – especially on a high-stakes day like #GivingTuesday! Here are some ways you can manage your social media workflow internally to make the day run smoother – allowing you can keep calm and fundraise on.

Appoint a social media manager. If you don't have a staffer who manages your social media accounts, you'll need to appoint one. Nonprofits will often hand control of social

media accounts to their youngest staffers, but unless they have fundraising, marketing, communications, and customer service experience, that can be a mistake. Make sure whoever you appoint understands your nonprofit's message, goals, and strategy for GAgives on #GivingTuesday. Your manager will also need to make sure pre-scheduled posts fire when they should; supporters receive a speedy response to their questions or issues; comments are answered politely and promptly; and that updates, milestones, and anything that cannot be scheduled in advance are posted live. If you have the human resources, this manager can also delegate responsibilities as needed.

Schedule anything you can in advance. Twitter's Tweetdeck and Facebook's Publishing Tools both allow you to schedule posts in advance, as do third-party tools like [Hootsuite](#) and [Buffer](#). Take advantage! Scheduling as much as you can in advance will allow you to manage your time better on #GivingTuesday, avoid silly mistakes like typos or broken links, easily coordinate posts across multiple platforms, and focus your attention on engaging with your followers rather than scrambling to get posts up.

Meet regularly. You can keep everyone on the same page and make sure nothing important slips through the cracks by meeting with your team regularly. You may want to caucus every other week leading up to #GivingTuesday and, as the big day approaches, switch to a weekly schedule or add some time to your existing meetings. The important thing is to *have the meeting*. Send out agendas to keep your meetings on-track, and distribute notes afterward to help people remember what was decided.

Posting tips: How, what, and when

It's tempting to look for "hacks" to increase your nonprofit's social media visibility when you have so much riding on GAgives on #GivingTuesday, but the truth is that you can't cheat the system. However, there are guidelines you can use to make sure your posts are seen and things you can do to make sure you're maximizing your impact on social media.

In the months **leading up to #GivingTuesday**, follow these steps:

Analyze your social media activity. Social media platforms give you free tools you can use to track your performance on social media, so *put them to use*. It's easier to clone past success than go back to the drawing board, so take a look at your social media performance for the past year, or at least the last quarter. What posts or tweets performed best? Can you identify anything they all have in common? What time of the day are your social media accounts most active? (Facebook Insights and Twitter Analytics tell you.) Is there a type of content or post that gets more attention than others? Find the bright spots in your social media history and work to replicate them!

Focus on getting followers. Take a look at all channels of communication you maintain with your supporters. How are you urging your donors to follow you on social media? Do you have links to your social media accounts in all of your e-blasts? Are you plugging your social media accounts in your mailers? Do you have prominent links to your social media accounts on your website? Have you ever paid for an ad with a call-to-action (CTA) to like your page or follow your account? Do all of your volunteers know about your social media accounts, and are they being asked to follow them? Are your employees linking to your social media accounts in their email signatures? Do an audit of what you're already doing to get social media followers, and fill in any gaps you find.

Get to know your audience. Social media collects data about its users, and much of that data is available to your nonprofit at no cost. In Facebook Insights, take a look at "People" to see what kinds of people are following you and engaging with your posts. You might be surprised with the results! Knowing where most of your followers are located can help with ad targeting, and demographics (such as gender and age) can help you figure out how to best talk to your social media audience. For instance, if 70% of your Facebook followers are women between the ages of 45-54, a testimonial from another woman around the same age might resonate more with them.

Look to the experts for inspiration. Odds are, there is a national organization, or at least a larger organization, working in the same area of the nonprofit sector as your organization. Local animal shelters and rescue groups have the The Humane Society of the United States, Best Friends Animal Sanctuary, and the ASPCA as national counterparts. Food banks have hunger relief organizations like Feeding America, Bread for the World, and World Food Programme addressing hunger on a larger scale. Environmental nonprofits have Greenpeace, the Sierra Club, and The Ocean Conservancy working on the same issues. And so on. You may not have their huge staff, operating budgets or followers, but you can peek at their social media and see what they do. What works well for them? Is there something they're doing over and over? What kinds of stories do they tell? What CTAs do they use? How are they talking about the issues? Study the big dogs and get inspiration from their social media presence.

Post consistently. Running a nonprofit is hard work and we know that social media can often take a backseat to making sure your day-to-day operations are running smoothly (and occasionally putting out fires). But social media is about building a relationship with your followers – and you can only build that relationship by being a constant presence in their feed. So make sure you're posting regularly leading up to #GivingTuesday, and beyond that, responding to comments and getting involved in conversations. Not only will this make your followers sit up and pay attention to what you post on #GivingTuesday,

the fact that they have shown an interest in your posts will make the platform more likely to show your posts to them.

When deciding **what to post**, keep these suggestions in mind:

Link to your GAgives.org page. Seriously, *don't forget about this!* No matter what you're posting, make sure you have a link to your GAgives.org page each and every time!

Videos: Facebook loves them! We discussed how important videos are to your GAgives on #GivingTuesday campaign above, and part of the reason is that Facebook loves videos. Facebook prioritizes videos in users' feeds, which means you'll get more organic reach. Specifically, Facebook rewards videos that have been uploaded directly to Facebook (as opposed to links to YouTube or Vimeo videos) with prioritization and increased reach. While you don't have to have more than one edited video for Facebook, think about how you can incorporate videos into your posting schedule. Lo-fi videos captured on smartphones – quotes from or interviews with your staff, a virtual tour of your facilities, or impromptu testimonials from people who visit your facility (make sure you get them to sign a release!) – can be effective and easy to execute.

Pull back the curtain. As important as it is to maintain a professional, respectable image, people *love* behind-the-scenes looks at operations. Whether it's a movie set or a nonprofit, people enjoy seeing things they wouldn't see in their everyday lives. For example, one of our Community Engagement Specialists at Mightycause was a social media manager for an animal shelter. Some of the most popular content on their Facebook page was videos of staff doing their jobs: things like walking dogs and brushing cats, volunteers doing dishes and loads of laundry, tours of the dogs and cats in the kennel. These were everyday things that didn't seem particularly compelling to staff, but since most people don't get to see the work that goes into caring for shelter animals, it was fascinating to the shelter's followers on social media. It also builds a sense of trust and transparency, which inspires people to donate.

Share images. You have a lot to compete with on social media. The average Facebook user has 338 friends – and that doesn't even include the Facebook Pages they follow. A great way to get people to *stop scrolling and pay attention* is by posting an eye-catching image. You don't need to be shocking or controversial; high-quality images that help tell the story of what your nonprofit does are all that's needed.

Say thank you. You know that “thank you” is so important in fundraising, and social media is no exception. Be sure to thank your social media audience for spreading the word about your GAgives on #GivingTuesday fundraising efforts and helping you reach your funding goals. Get creative – you can say *thank you* in many ways, such as creating an image to thank your followers, going around with a smartphone and recording staff members and volunteers saying thank you, etc.

When to post? Keep these occasions in mind:

Kickoff: Let everyone know that GAgives on #GivingTuesday has begun!

Milestones: Post when your nonprofit reaches a fundraising milestone – the first \$500, the first \$1,000 and so on. Seeing that your campaign is picking up steam can build excitement on social media!

Peak hours for your nonprofit on social media: The truth is that there are no hard-and-fast rules about “the best time to post.” There has been some research on best times to post that’s useful as a starting point, but remember: They’re not rules! To figure out what’s best for your nonprofit, you’ll have to look at your analytics. You’ll probably find that it varies between platforms. You can also run tests: Post at different times and keep track of when your audience is most responsive.

Final hour: Plan to make a push for donations during the final hour of GAgives on #GivingTuesday. A deadline creates urgency: It can be the push some people need to actually pull out their wallets and donate. So don’t be afraid to lay it on a little thick! Let your followers know how much time is left, and how far you are from your funding goal.

Social Media Do’s and Don’ts

Do:

Keep it short and sweet. Social media is fast-moving and people generally will not read novella-length posts. If you need to expand on a point, do it elsewhere (like your blog, website or GAgives.org page). You can then share the link with your social media followers.

Be authentic. Most people on social media don't like being advertised to, so stay away from sounding like you're pitching a product. Instead, focus on telling your story and connecting with your audience.

Be available. Social media is interactive, so in order to avoid talking *at* your followers, you will need to be available to talk *with* them. Your point person should be responding quickly to messages, responding to comments, and engaging online – especially during #GivingTuesday itself.

Be human. Your nonprofit is made up of people. Your nonprofit helps people. So put the human side of your work first in your social media accounts. Be real, be funny, be humble, be empathetic, be kind. Be the kind of person you'd want to follow on social media. Don't be afraid to introduce your social media audience to the people behind the curtain! When people get to know and trust your nonprofit, they will be more likely to donate. Seeing the "human side" of your nonprofit makes people feel personally invested in your success.

Go beyond the "ask." Have you ever had a friend that only contacts you when they need something? Annoying, isn't it? Well, that's what it can feel like when a nonprofit does nothing *but* ask on social media. Don't be so focused on asking that you forget to build relationships. Post things that might interest your audience, let them know what's happening at your nonprofit, have conversations, allow your followers to share their thoughts, and *ask questions*.

Use the #GAgives on #GivingTuesday hashtag. It's the easiest way to be part of the GAgives on #GivingTuesday conversation!

Don't:

Be afraid to ask. It's always surprising to find that people in the nonprofit sector sometimes skirt around asking for help directly because it can feel uncomfortable. It's important to overcome the fear of asking. Ask directly and sincerely for help. Your social media followers *want to help you* – that's why they follow you! – but if you don't ask for help, you won't receive it. Remember also that fundraising isn't about begging; it's about asking. You may think it's obvious that you're posting a link to your donation page because you want donations, but *you need to ask*. Never leave out the ask!

Spam your followers. This has more to do with *what* you post than with *how often* you post. Don't go crazy with hashtags. Never tag a slew of your followers. Don't start sending direct messages to people out of the blue. Don't post a bunch of memes without comment. These are quick ways to lose followers and damage relationships.

Post without purpose. We all have a friend on social media who posts things just to post, right? Don't be that friend who posts poorly thought-out nonsense just for the sake of posting. Make sure you always have a purpose behind what you post. Whether you have an obvious CTA like "donate" or a more ambiguous purpose like engagement, check yourself before you post. Ask yourself, "Why am I posting this?" If the only answer is, "Because we haven't posted in awhile," don't post it.

Be unprofessional. It's fine to use abbreviations, a million emojis, and slang when you're posting on your personal social media accounts or texting friends, but on your nonprofit's social media? Don't even think about it! You don't have to post in AP style, but make sure you use proper spelling and grammar. Being *too* informal can damage your credibility and reputation.

Get bogged down by technical questions. There is no magic number of times per day to post on social media, no witching hour for posting that will guarantee that your post goes viral, no secret hack for cracking Facebook's algorithm. Social media managers that are all about numbers and science don't tend to do a very good job. So just don't worry about it. Use whatever knowledge you can find in your social media analytics. Follow best practices. Focus on delivering authentic, high-quality content and building relationships with your social media audience.

There really aren't many "tricks" to being awesome at social media. But using the information provided here, you can utilize social media to make your GAgives on #GivingTuesday campaign a runaway success.