



# Public Awareness

## PRofile: Era of Social Media

Everything is “going online” these days and public relations is no exception. It has entered the era of social media! Gone are the days when PR was only about getting an article in the newspaper. Traditional media do not have the power and influence they once did. So, in addition to getting articles in the newspaper, it is now also important to have an online presence. Social media help garner that online presence.

In this new form of communication, organizations use multiple electronic formats, not only to convey messages to target audiences, but to engage and involve them in online communities. Like the name suggests, an online community comprises a group of people who interact primarily online. Social media uses technologies such as blogs, podcasts, RSS feeds, and online videos—which can help organizations reach wider audiences and foster virtual interaction.

These terms may seem foreign, but as Soroptimist moves forward, members will see these new technologies more and more. The federation is embracing these new techniques because traditional PR methods are not enough to increase awareness of the organization and its mission. Keeping in mind that the public relations goals of the Renaissance Campaign include increasing name recognition by 5 percent and getting 50 percent of non-members who know the name to associate it with the mission, the federation is trying new ways to meet these goals.

While Soroptimist wants to ensure that members’ experiences are enjoyable and worthwhile, it must also appeal to wider audiences, including media, potential members, and sponsors.

Below is a primer to help Soroptimist members become familiar with new technologies, which will play an ever-increasing role in the federation’s practice of public relations:

### Blogs

As mentioned in a previous PRofile article on websites (September/October/November 2007), a blog is a shared online journal that allows people to share their views and discuss various topics in an online environment. Soroptimist’s new website has two blogs. The magazine blog on the homepage allows site visitors to discuss various feature articles from the magazine. In the executive director’s blog (accessible from the members area), Executive Director Leigh provides her thoughts on various topics. The Live Your Dream site also features a blog. Visit <Soroptimist.org> and <LiveYourDreamCampaign.org> to check out and participate in the blogs.

### Podcasts

Podcasting is another new type of online media delivery. A podcast is a blog in an audio format. To podcast, the creator of the

material must publish selected audio files through the Internet. Users can then listen to the information through an RSS feed (see below). Podcasting is a great new medium because it allows users to create something like an online talk show or radio program about any topic.

Since the beginning of its partnership with Soroptimist, Women’s Radio has podcasted interviews with Soroptimist leaders on several topics on its website at <womensradio.org>. Topics have included the Soroptimist Live Your Dream Campaign, Soroptimist’s domestic violence initiatives, and Soroptimist’s tsunami relief efforts.

### RSS Feeds

RSS stands for Really Simple Syndication. RSS feeds make it possible for web users to get the most up-to-date information from websites they are most interested in. Many news-related websites and weblogs syndicate their websites as an RSS feed. By subscribing to an RSS feed on a particular site, web users don’t have to visit the site everyday. When new content is published to the site, the user will be alerted through their RSS feed.

Both the Best for Women and Executive Director blogs at <soroptimist.org> are obtainable through RSS feeds.



**This orange symbol is the standard RSS feed icon, which alerts users that RSS is available.**

### Online video

Posting an online video is an inexpensive way to add life to any website. When discussing online video, YouTube—a website where visitors can watch and share original videos—probably comes to mind. Visitors can also email these videos or add them to personal blogs, which both help increase the number of people who view them.

Visitors to Soroptimist’s website can view the organization’s video, “Helping Women and Girls to Live Their Dreams” and the Women’s Opportunity Awards public service announcement. Stay tuned while the federation increases its online video efforts.

Soroptimist encourages all members to be advocates of social media and users of these new technologies. Remember to visit the Soroptimist website <Soroptimist.org> and the Live Your Dream Campaign website at <LiveYourDreamCampaign.org> to experiment with social media first-hand. 🌐

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