



Public Awareness

PRofile: Using Social Networking Sites

What do Myspace, Facebook, and LinkedIn have in common? They are social networking sites. Millions of people around the world use these sites to connect with others everyday. These sites help create an environment where online communities can grow and flourish—a virtual place where people can meet others with similar interests, professions and ideas—or where people can connect with friends and acquaintances on the World Wide Web, no matter their geographical location, to simply stay in touch. Social networking has changed the way people communicate and share information in today's society.

Social networking sites are not just for personal use. Organizations also use them to connect with their publics. These sites, like most new media, provide organizations the opportunity to forfeit the middleman and speak directly to their audiences. In the traditional media sense, the middlepeople are the media, the gatekeepers through which information flows. By the time the information comes from the source and is filtered through the media, the original message could be misconstrued. Therefore, organizations use these social networking sites as a way to transmit their messages directly to their target groups.

Lately, SIA has noticed that many clubs and members have started to take an interest in using social networking sites. Some clubs use them to communicate with members about meetings, upcoming events, and other club news. Some use these sites to connect with other organizations similar to Soroptimist for possible partnerships, or to connect with other women who may be interested in getting involved.

It is important that all clubs remember the big picture and be consistent with the information they post on social networking sites. Even though each club is only a small part of a larger organization, the federation relies heavily on clubs to collectively increase awareness of Soroptimist. Keep in mind the mission of improving the lives of women and girls, and all the work Soroptimist has done thus far to build a successful brand image.

It is difficult for SIA to monitor every club's social networking page. But it hopes every club's page is mission-focused. Remember the following guidelines when creating a social networking page:

Use Soroptimist brand identifiers

Many people personalize their social network pages by adding touches such as photos and music. When developing a page, clubs should represent Soroptimist by using its brand identifiers: the "S" logo, mission statement, and Best for Women tagline.

Stick to the mission

Everything on the page should be consistent with Soroptimist's mission. If explaining projects the club participates in, these projects should help women and girls. Photos should be of club

members doing mission-focused activities. List information about programs, such as the Soroptimist Women's Opportunity, Soroptimist Making a Difference for Women, and Soroptimist Violet Richardson Award programs; the Soroptimists STOP Trafficking project; and the Live Your Dream Campaign. Clubs can copy and paste information about these programs from SIA's website at <Soroptimist.org>. Clubs should also link their social network pages to both SIA's website and <LiveYourDreamCampaign.org>.

Be professional

Don't post inappropriate material. Since the inception of the Renaissance Campaign in 2004, Soroptimist has worked hard to revive its brand image. Clubs must portray Soroptimist in a positive light and remain professional.

Keep private information private

Because anyone can access social networking sites, it is important that members' personal information—such as their home and business phone numbers and addresses—do not go on social networking pages.

Keep content fresh

Social networking sites need to change frequently. That's what keeps people coming back. Clubs should keep sites updated.

Use SIA's sites to connect

Clubs don't have to create their own social networking pages to join an online community. Members can connect with others through SIA's websites at <Soroptimist.org> and <LiveYourDreamCampaign.org>. <Soroptimist.org> offers interactive polls on its homepage and member homepage. There is also a place for visitors to blog with the *Best for Women* magazine editors and Executive Director Leigh Wintz. <LiveYourDreamCampaign.org>, which was built upon social networking principles, offers an interactive blog by past Violet Richardson Award recipient, Jasmeet Sidhu; and a Live Your Dream message board, where visitors can discuss their dreams. SIA has plans to add more interactive features to both sites next year.

Social networking is a phenomenon that has brought the world closer by allowing people with different backgrounds and ideas to interact through online communities. Its popularity is only going to increase as more and more people become comfortable connecting online. Club members are encouraged to ask SIA for guidance if they are unsure or have questions about social networking sites. 🌐

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