

AUDITING YOUR ONLINE PUBLIC IMAGE

Presented by: Rotary Australia Public Image Team



Part 2. Getting Your System Right Before You Start

For many Clubs and Districts, maintaining an up-to-date online presence takes a significant amount of work. If the responsibility of manually updating your website, blog, newsletter, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter all falls on the one Rotarian, in all likelihood, either the person responsible or the content are likely to suffer...even more so if that person is also expected to generate content (i.e. writing stories or taking photos). Certainly the web is littered with out-dated Rotary content that someone just hasn't had the time or will to update.

Get the System Right First

Getting both the technological side and the human side of your system right before you begin is critical to having a successful online public image.

That means looking at:

- the Content Management System (CMS) you use for your website
- the platforms you use for communication (e.g. newsletter format, types of social media)
- the processes you use for editing and updating, and
- the personnel you have managing your online public image.

Here are some things to think about as you organise how you will create and maintain an online presence and what sort of platforms and processes will be used to do so.

1. Can replication be made redundant?

Quite often in Rotary, the same story is broadcast across several mediums – we may want to tell our Facebook and Twitter followers about the same event that we have also written up on our website and newsletter. Instead of writing 4 different stories or uploading 4 separate times, it's far smarter to look for ways that you can automate processes so you only have to do the task once.

2. What is each platform used for?

There's a great picture out on the web explaining social media by giving the example of donuts:

- Facebook: "I like donuts"

- Twitter: "I'm eating a donut right now"
- Youtube: "Here I am eating a donut"

So what are you using your Club's platforms for? Is there a better type of platform that allows you to meet your aims better? If it's engaging and attracting others, you need to go where your prospective audience is and create content they're likely to want to look at.

3. Use a Content Management System (CMS) that makes it easier

Similarly, you should find out if there's an easier way to manage not only your online content, but all the laborious administrative tasks in your Club or District. Many CMS systems for websites are available that can help you with managing your website, as well as managing mail-outs, club administration, membership, online payments and donations, e-commerce and merchandising and much more. Depending on the features of the individual CMS itself, they can be used to change multiple pages of a website at once, time when content is published and when it is taken down, and to check which links are still active.

There are many different CMS systems out there, so check out pages in your District for the layout you like and ask the Club or District running it about the features and benefits of the systems they use, as well as what features they wish they had from other CMS systems. It's a great place to start.

4. Who is responsible?

The big thing here is to have more than one person committed to maintaining your presence. When only one person is available to upload content, your profile will inevitably suffer when that person is busy with work, away on holiday or business, sick, attending to family matters, overwhelmed or tired of the responsibility, or no longer in Rotary.

Having multiple people involved helps for a number of other reasons too:

- More likelihood of timely responses to or moderation of online posts on social media

- Another set of eyes to proof and improve the other's work

- It can create a sense of collaboration and teamwork and provide support when challenges arise

- Multiple people to help on large projects that would otherwise require a significant amount of time to complete (which can be hard for one person to block out of their calendar)

- Possible to have someone generating content and someone else uploading, lessening the load

- Reasonable workloads don't kill passion and turn tasks into a chore like massive workloads

You can let people work in their area of passion: e.g. let those who love graphic design work on the visual side, while having writers work on content creation and your resident photographer working on the images.

5. *Good processes prevent bad public images*

You can have all the best platforms, multiple professional web-builders and much more, but if you don't have good processes in place, your online profile can still cause issues. Some things to think about with regard to processes for managing online content include:

Is work proofed or checked before uploading?

Do you have a basic style guide?

Are there editors in place who can remove content quickly if needed?

Do you rotate responsibility for creating interesting content or social media content regularly amongst members?

Do you have regular audits of content?

Are there protocols in place and people assigned to deal with enquiries, social media comments or other communications?

Do you have a system in place for dealing with yearly changeovers promptly?

Are people aware they can contribute and would they know who to pass the information to?

Is the work distributed in a way in which nobody is asked to do too much?

Do you have templates, examples or guidelines on how to produce great material?

Do you have processes in place to determine which content should be distributed or promoted to Rotarians only (e.g. internal administration) and which should be made public?

A general rule is that nothing should go up publicly unless it is attractive to the public.

A Stitch in time...

Overall, the basic message is simple – get things right before you begin and you can save your Club or District a lot of trouble later on.

Some practical questions to help you determine if there's an easier way might include:

What replication of effort is taking up the most time presently?

When you change a piece of content on one page or site, do you have to change it across other sites as well? Is there a system available that can do it all at once?

Do you need each different communications platform? For example, is anyone reading your blog or engaging with you on Twitter? Are they reaching different audiences?

Is there content from Rotary International or other Clubs and Districts you could share or modify instead of creating your own bespoke content?

Can you connect your Facebook and Twitter accounts so that what posts on one medium also posts on the other?

Can you integrate your newsletter and website so that articles can be chosen to feature in your newsletter, your website news, or both? (remember your audience when choosing which you will put where)

Can your current website Content Management System (CMS) integrate Facebook or Twitter content you upload?

Can you generate your newsletter content and articles in a way ideal to post as Facebook page links to save you from writing up stories there?

Is what you are doing good value for money? Even if it's free, is it costing your members or support because of the work that needs to be put in or the results it's producing?