



5 Tips & 5 Totally Free Tools to Elevate Your Digital Presence

November 17, 2017 – By Jess Gillis
(originally published at volunteertoronto.ca)

No Digital Marketing Manager? Here's How To Get By!

Grassroots groups and non-profits are often strapped for resources, and it's not uncommon for volunteers, members, and staff to wear many hats. Is your Kitchen Assistant managing your website? Are you tweeting two weeks' worth of content at 2 am on Friday because that's the only time you have to do it?

Some say *"Never judge a book by its cover"*, but many of us still do. The same can be said for your online presence. Not everyone is going to care if your Facebook cover photo is badly cropped and pixelated, but ignoring comments, having impossible-to-find contact information, or being invisible on Google may cost you clients, followers, and/or legitimacy.

If this sounds familiar, these tips are here help.

Five Tips!

1. Get Branded

Getting branded is less painful than it sounds. Your organization's brand is essentially colours, fonts, shapes, messaging, language, and—ideally—a logo which represent your mission, vision, values, and voice. Even just selecting some colours and fonts and using them consistently can improve your digital image. If you'd like to dive deeper into, check out [this post](#).

2. Have a Website

Your website doesn't have to be fancy, or complicated, but it should exist. Think of it as your central hub that holds your contact information, links to your social media, information about your organization, and even a "donate" button. When you're out connecting with folks, you can simply direct them to your site. While it's not free, consider registering a custom domain for your site (they cost around \$15 per year).

3. Get on Social Media

Social media can be intimidating, even for us pros. Though it can ask a lot in terms of time and energy, it also gives back, like a platform for conversation, and unique insights into your crowd.

4. Maximize Your Socials

Social media works best when you have a large—or a smaller, but highly engaged—network. The most effective way to achieve that (without a huge budget) are to provide the following:

- [Good quality content](#): Relevant to your audience's interests and the channel (e.g. GIFs on twitter, photos on Instagram)
- Strong engagement: Responding to comments and messages, directing your audience with calls-to-action (e.g. "tag a friend who would cuddle this cute dog!"), and most important: listening!
- Consistency: If you're radio silent for 3 weeks then post 10 things in 10 minutes on Facebook, your content will get lost and your audience will get confused. (Also, Facebook's algorithms [like around 1 post per day](#)).

5. Schedule! Make a [calendar like this one](#). Use your spare time to bank content (articles, links, event postings, etc.) for the week, or even the month ahead, and use an app or website (listed below) to schedule it. Then, hop online during your commute or when you have a spare minute and share, retweet, and respond to inquiries. Use free tools like [Google docs](#) and Trello to stay organized and communicate with your team.

5 Tools!

1. Canva is an accessible, responsive tool with pre-made templates for all of the common social channels, in addition to free images, clip art, and fonts. They also have a wide selection of templates for printed assets, like brochures, envelopes, and posters. Canva has [a free option for non-profits](#) which allows you access to the upgraded Work Plan (it's well worth it to upload your brand colours and fonts, and use the "[magic resize](#)" function). Check out these tutorials:

- [60 Second Design](#)
- [Branding Basics](#)
- [Intro to Canva for Work](#)

2. Wix. Need a website? Wix is a great free option. With intuitive drag and drop functionality and hundreds of free templates and apps to choose from, its HTML-based sites are also optimized for mobile. It's also super easy to preview what your site will look like live. Click [here](#) for a quick intro lesson.

3. Hootsuite. This amazing tool allows you to schedule and share content to a variety of different social media channels. It also allows you to set up custom lists and channels—so you can monitor, say, all tweets about penguins—AND gives you access to data.

4. Stock Images. You should almost never be posting content without an accompanying image. Images draw people in and give context. Check out [this list of 21 fantastic stock image sites](#). Below are a select five:

- [Pexels](#)
- [Pixabay](#)
- [StockSnap.io](#)
- [Unsplash](#)
- [Gratisography](#)

5. Free Fonts. Not that Arial and Calibri aren't super sexy, but sometimes you want to create more of an impact than the few standards can provide. These are a few tested and true sites for free font downloads:

- [1001 Free Fonts](#)
- [DaFont](#)
- [FontSpace](#)

Remember! You don't have to jump into every social media channel, app, or website builder right away. Some of these tips and tools may work for you, some may not. Maybe the conversation you want to have is on Twitter, or maybe you have a visual presence that would do better on Instagram or Pinterest. Start small, and build your presence as your knowledge and capacity grow.