

Combining Social Media and Association Management Systems

By Amith Nagarajan

Social media provides a rich and up-to-date data source that is maintained at no cost to you by an army of volunteers—your members and prospective members. This data, when harnessed into the core of your operations within your association management system (AMS), can be among the most significant benefits gained from a social media strategy.

Connecting social media and AMS.

Social networks enable groups of like-minded individuals to congregate and share knowledge. It is possible to integrate this information with an association's existing data fairly easily. Integration is highly dependent on the association management system utilized to seamlessly push and pull data between the AMS and social network. Since the social network platform tracks relationships between members and others, an AMS needs to be able to transfer this information in and out of the database seamlessly. The same principle applies to areas of interest/expertise and other profile data. When the data from a social network is tightly tied into the AMS, many interesting things can happen. A few examples are described below.

Managing a member's change in employers. Traditionally, when a member leaves an organization it has been difficult to track them, unless the member reconnects with the association. However, if a member is an active participant in a social network, the association can track and integrate a member's career changes into their AMS. In this example, an additional opportunity exists: marketing to the person that replaced the member at their old company. The social network knows about the job change and when this data moves into the AMS, additional workflow can automatically kick in. An association could set up a rule within the AMS that creates a task for a staff member to go to the original company and find out who the replacement is. Once that is done, the replacement contact at the company could be targeted for membership, events and other offerings. This workflow could also send an automated email congratulating the existing member on their move and ask for help in finding additional people in their new company that would benefit from membership.

Supporting viral marketing and referral campaigns. Social networks provide necessary data to launch highly personalized campaigns. If an AMS is tracking the relationships of an individual, personalized messages can be generated that request their support in areas such as fundraising, membership campaigns, grassroots initiatives, events and more. The idea centers on asking the member to help

by requesting people in their network to participate in an activity. For example, in a member-get-a-member campaign, an email could be sent requesting a member's support targeting nonmembers they know in the industry. The email could show a list of people in their network that are in the industry but are not members. The email could allow them to check boxes next to the names they want to invite and the association website would automatically send messages to each prospective member on behalf of the current member. Similar concepts could be applied to grassroots, fundraising, and many other activities. The common thread is that these campaigns require knowledge of the network of relationships, something that social media provides today!

Most of the buzz around social media relates to building communities, new methods to communicate, and reaching diverse segments of a population. All of these benefits are good reasons to consider a social media strategy. The value of the social network to an association goes beyond these concepts when tight integration between the AMS and social network is established. The rich information within a social media platform can directly be leveraged to improve many association business practices right now.



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Aptify is a leading international provider of association management software. Aptify provides a comprehensive and flexible system that enables an organization to easily change while maintaining an upgrade path.

Aptify's application contains a centralized relationship management engine that can tie into leading social networks and private-branded services. User profile, relationship, and interest information can be easily transferred between a social network and Aptify. Aptify's graphical workflow technology empowers an organization to easily view and change their processes. As an association changes, Aptify's flexibility provides a path to continuously improve.

For more information about Aptify, visit www.aptify.com.

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