



## **Using Social Networking to Recruit Mentors**

According to the results of Wave VIII of the Mentor Michigan Census, 66% of mentoring organizations use social media to recruit potential volunteers. Social networking, when used effectively and appropriately, can be an extremely powerful tool for your mentoring program. The difficult part of social networking is figuring out how to use it most effectively within the goals of the user. For a person who is socially networking on a personal level, websites such as Facebook and Myspace might be used where personal profiles can be made and maintained, only allowing friends and family members to view, and a social bookmarking service may be used to organize their favorite photos, news stories, and websites. Organizations and companies might be more apt to use a Facebook fan page, blogs, Youtube, and social media websites to share news about events and to share photos and video clips with volunteers, participants, or potential volunteers and participants.

**Reach potential volunteers:** According to a study done on Barack Obama's social media toolkit, there are a number of lessons to learn that can help you more effectively reach potential volunteers and mentors.

1. Consider the layers of engagement required of volunteers and mentors – the more engaged a volunteer is with your program, the more commitment and weight that engagement carries. Creating an online presence by using social networking allows potential volunteers and mentors to choose their level of engagement – whether to become a fan of your page, or come to the latest event your organization hosts, potential volunteers and mentors can become accustomed to your organization or program at their own pace.
2. Use tools people are familiar with, and go where your targeted audience is. The fastest growing population on Facebook is women age 55-65. Statistics like this and others can be found within each particular website, but please note they are constantly changing.
3. Ensure that people can find your content. Include your social media presence on program materials and through publicity. While talking to potential volunteers and mentors, tell them about your online presence and invite them to become a part of your social networking sphere. Ask your current social network to invite others to join as well.

**Evaluate Goals:** In order to most effectively use social networking for yourself or for your organization, it is essential to evaluate the goals for using such tools. Do you want to reach more potential volunteers for your organization? Would you like to share photographs from a current event with prominent community members? Do you need to spread the word about a fundraiser your company is planning to host? Evaluating your needs before you tackle social networking tools will help you identify what you need to become a part of.

**Example:** Here's a story that might be able to help you think through what you or your program wants to achieve through social networking:

*Jennifer owns a dance studio where she teaches ballroom dance classes. In an effort to increase attendance, Jennifer decides that it would be a good idea to reach a younger audience by creating a Twitter account for the studio. After creating the account, and updating the studio's status a number of times with stories like "Registration today from 1 pm to 7 pm @ 333 Highway Road in Downtown" and "Salsa class every Monday from 4-5, \$15 per class", Jennifer realizes that these updates aren't boosting her attendance like she desired. When she evaluates who she is "following" the studio on Twitter and who is "following" her, she sees that the only audience she is reaching is her current students. So using this information, Jennifer instead creates a YouTube account for her studio, and begins to post short videos of dance classes and teaching easy combinations on the studio's account. She notices that since "tagging" the video with words like ballroom, dance, salsa, and her studio's name, she is gaining quite a lot of attention, and the phone lines at the dance studio have been ringing off the hook from people who are interested in taking classes. In an effort to make social networking work even harder for her studio, Jennifer asked her current students to update their own personal Twitter statuses with information about the dance studio. Jennifer's attendance increased threefold.*

Moral of the story: Make a plan of how to engage volunteers and potential mentors online – this will make your social networking presence more efficient and will work better for you. There is a vast range of possibilities for your own social media toolkit, so take some time to figure out what might be best for your program needs.