

Non-profits Are You Listening?



Many small non-profits and membership organizations are wondering how to get started with social media. As we noted in an earlier post, [Is Social Media a Waste of Time for Your Association](#), if you are new to social media, **you might want to start by listening.**

In a recent NTEN (Nonprofit Technology Network) post - [Five Free Tools for Social Media Listening](#) - Carie Lewis, of the Humane Society of the United States, suggests that *"listening is the first step in social media. You have to listen to what others are saying about you before you jump into the fire. Listening will tell you what people are saying, and where they are saying it, so you know where to get started."*

Here are 4 (of the 5) free tools that Lewis recommends to help you get started with listening online. You may be familiar with some of these already, but we thought it might be helpful to outline these for social media newbies.

1. **Google Alerts** (alerts.google.com)

Google Alerts are email updates of the latest relevant Google results (web, news, etc.) based on your choice of query or topic.

2. **Tweetdeck** (tweetdeck.com)

TweetDeck acts as a personal real-time browser, connecting you with your contacts across Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, Foursquare, Google Buzz and more.

3. **Tweetbeep** (tweetbeep.com)

Tweetbeep is essentially Google Alerts for Twitter.

4. **Kurrently** (kurrently.com)

This is a real-time search engine for Facebook and Twitter.

5. **Twitter Analyzer** (twitteranalyzer.com) - *this website is currently suspended.*

Follow Through a Google Reader

Another simple way to get started with online listening is to set up a [Google Reader](#) and subscribe to RSS feeds for non-profit, membership and volunteer blogs (like [Wild Apricot](#)), as well as others that may be specific to your organization's sector or interests. Again, start with a few feeds because while following blogs may be less time consuming than Twitter, you may find that one great blog post leads you to another, and before long you can't keep up with or digest the information you're receiving.

Responding to What You Hear

In her NTEN post, Lewis also offers suggestions on what to do when you encounter people talking about your organization. But for small non-profits and membership groups that are new to social media, the key is to start small - don't get ahead of yourself. Set simple, achievable short-term social media goals, such as following 10 people in your industry/sector on Twitter each day. Once you become familiar with listening, the next step is to create a social media strategy for building an online presence for your organization.

Read More:

For more information on getting started with Twitter and Google Alerts, check out these Wild Apricot blog posts:

- [Get Started With Google Alerts - Part 1 How to Set Up News Alerts](#)
- [Get Started With Google Alerts - Part 2 How to Get Better News Alerts](#)
- [Get Started With RSS Feeds & Readers](#)
- [Twitter 101 for Non-profits](#)

More advice on Twitter from other bloggers:

- [19 Successful Non-Profit Managers Worth a Follow on Twitter](#) - Nonprofit Management Masters
- [Making Twitter More Useful for You](#) - Aaron Lee on SocialMediaToday



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