

Appendix B



Using Social Media for CSA Communications

Chapter 7 covers the basics of creating a website and a blog for your CSA, but there's a lot more you can do online to stay connected to your current members and promote what you are doing to prospective members and the community at large. There are so many different ways to use social media to promote a cause or an organization these days that it was overwhelming to include them in the chapter on communications, so instead we'll list a few here, with some suggestions on how you can use each one.

You've got a website and a blog set up for your CSA. You're all set, right? Well, let's say that's a good start, but there are literally dozens of other online sites that can help you recruit new members and communicate with the members you already have as well as the community at large. If you are interested in having more information online, look into Yelp and Google Places to put your urban CSA on the electronic map in your community. These sites also allow people to post reviews about your place.

There's a good chance that people who join your CSA will be familiar with social media outlets, and you can find volunteers who are willing to put in some of their work share hours sitting in front of a computer instead of pulling weeds or washing carrots. Keep in mind that you may need volunteers to do online promotional work year-round, not just during the growing season.

Find someone who'd like to set up a Pinterest "pinboard," sort of a virtual bulletin board, where recipes, photos, and other items of interest from your CSA can be posted. You can post photographs on Picasa or Flickr or PhotoBucket; you can set up a Google+ page (if you think it's ever going to catch on); you can post YouTube videos showing how to plant or transplant or harvest or distribute your produce. The possibilities are literally endless . . . here are just a few of the ways we are using the Internet to communicate what we are doing at the Enright Ridge CSA.

Facebook

We had a Facebook page before we had a website, and some smaller urban CSAs—and those who would rather spend more time farming and less time online—might choose to operate with a Facebook page and a blog as their only online presence.

Set up an organizational Facebook page by going to Facebook.com; under the Sign Up button, click on Create a Page. You will see choices for the kind of page you want to create. Most urban CSAs would use

“Cause or community” or “Local business or place.” Choose a type and fill out the information required, then click the “I agree to Facebook Pages terms.” (It’s always a good idea to click on the terms and read them first, before you agree.) Click the Get Started button, and the page will create itself after you have provided the basic information.

If you’ve done the setup work on the Facebook page and provided some personal information, you will be one of the administrators or managers of the page. Keep in mind that you do need to have a personal Facebook page as well to be an administrator; if you do not have one, Facebook will ask you to create one and will walk you through the steps for that, too. After you have the Facebook page set up, you can easily add other administrators or managers. The specific command names change from time to time on Facebook (and on other websites of this type), but look for an Edit Page button, and then select Admin Roles or something similar to open a dialog box that allows you to add administrators.

Administrators or managers can post things to your Facebook page under your CSA page name, but anyone who is interested can post on your Facebook page, so members can join the online community and comment on your CSA’s posts or add their own posts—comments or recipes, questions, photos, videos, or links to other sites of interest.

We have not had any trouble with inappropriate posts (so far), but if you do have a problem, the administrators can delete unwanted posts and block specific users from posting on your page, too. Remember the interactive, intertwining nature of the Internet, too; put a link to your Facebook page on your website and your blog, and post links to your blog on Facebook to get members who look at your Facebook page regularly to visit your blog, too. It’s all circular, but creating webs of information keeps everyone at the farm connected.

Administrators can share the task of maintaining, updating, and checking up on your CSA’s Facebook page. This is something that really needs to be attended to almost daily; post something about the week’s produce, a cartoon that is on topic, or a link to an article or recipe, just to get people talking—so to speak—online. Figure on 10 to 15 minutes a day to keep your Facebook page current and useful to your online community. CSA members will pitch in with posts of their own to keep the page active, relevant, and up to date.

Twitter

Like Facebook, Twitter has become common. It’s not all the latest celebrity gossip; for your CSA, it does have its practical uses, too. Twitter has the capability to be used by any team leader at your farm who needs help—it is very simple to use, messages are short (140 characters or less), and with an account name and password, anyone can post a call for workers from a computer or smartphone.

Now, the catch is that if you simply post something to Twitter, only people who also have Twitter accounts and have signed up to follow you on Twitter will get the message. However, it is easy to add a little code to a website page to create a Twitter feed, as they call it, which will post any Twitter messages from your account onto a website. We put ours on the Work page of our website, and we encourage team leaders to post work opportunities and members to check the Work page when they have time and want to do some work at the farm.

If you were scared off by that reference to code, don’t worry. The ability to put a Twitter feed on your website is handled by a “widget” that does all the work for you; you just cut and paste the widget code into your website. Search for *Twitter widget* online, you will find links to the code you need and step-by-step directions on how to embed it in your website page.

This season, we're using Twitter to post work opportunities as they come up. Follow us @EnrightCSA or check below for posts about where and when workers are needed.



You can create a Twitter feed on your website Work page so that anyone who checks the site can see if work opportunities have been posted

And if this still sounds too complicated, let us reassure you with two thoughts—first, we didn't know what we were doing when we started putting together our website. We learned on the fly, looking things up as needed, and it only hurt our heads a little bit. Now we have a little knowledge—a dangerous thing—and still manage to stay just a step or two ahead of what we need to keep all of our online balls in the air. But we do manage it!

Second, if you just can't handle the idea of trying to figure it out on your own, enlist some teenagers who need community service hours. They'll enjoy showing you their expertise and you'll be an old hand at Twitter in no time.

After you have a Twitter feed on your website, and you've let team leaders/staff members know the user name and password they need, you can sit back and let this particular social media function without much intervention, unless you have something to communicate to all of your members quickly and concisely.

QR Codes

One specific thing to mention that is Internet-based but can carry over into your print communication is QR (short for "quick response) codes. These are those scannable square black-and-white code blocks that



This QR code will take a user directly to the Enright CSA website when it is scanned

you see on posters and in ads all over the place these days. If someone with a smartphone or tablet scans the QR code, it will take them directly to your website.

Generate your own QR code at <http://qrcode.kaywa.com> and you can use it on brochures, business cards, posters, and displays to direct people to more information about your CSA.

These are just a few high-tech ways you can use to inform and connect with your CSA members and potential members. Though of course there's always the next big thing—as soon as it appears, you'll want to have a presence on it, too. In that sense, the online communications aspect of an urban CSA—or any other organization or business—can be a never-ending task. At some point, you just have to say “enough,” turn off the computer, and go out in the field and start farming.