**Tips for Increasing Online Civic Engagement**

Here are some ideas and a few tools for maximizing your use of online tools for civic engagement, with some offline suggestions too.

**Plan for involvement over time:** Civic work is not usually finished in a moment, and neither is engagement, so make a plan that involves awareness building and multiple opportunities for participation over time. You’re building a community of participants. Breaking topics into smaller questions or surveys and posting what comes next can help.

**Welcome digital newcomers and use offline contact to support online engagement:** Promote online opportunities at meetings and events. Set up “engagement stations,” or “digital door greeters,” to teach community members how and where to engage online. Show and do something on your blog or other media as part of your meeting. Post a sign and announce Twitter hashtags or other media being used. Hand out postcards with the online links and info on how to use them. Tools such as [Hoot Feed](http://blog.hootsuite.com/hootfeed) or Twitter [Fontana](http://twitterfontana.com/) (both freeware) offer a way to display tweets during your event.

**Encourage quick reads and dialogue:** Use attention grabbing headlines; be clear on what you are asking; make it simple to reply and put any deadlines right up front. Kick start conversations by working with other friends, volunteers or coworkers to seed topics or start commenting.

**Make it easy to participate:** When you post a call to action, use a short link or URL and be clear about the ways they can participate. Put any links up top, though you may repeat them later. It’s best to have a primary place to participate online.

**Allow multiple ways to contribute and consider what’s easiest:** Some may want to start with very easy ways like answering a one question poll or voting up or down. Invite people to brainstorm ideas, post photos, drawings, or videos and make comments. Use polls for easy, short engagement and surveys for more depth. Tools such as [Polleverywhere](http://www.polleverywhere.com/) allow texting or web responses and immediate viewing of results.

**Make it easy for people to sign up for your announcements:** How can people engage: email list, Twitter, Facebook? Let people know how to do it in your emails, print materials and other communications, make it highly visible on web pages and enable people to sign up at meetings.

**Interact regularly:** Post frequently; encourage dialogue and unique entries.

**Go where people are:** Market your opportunity with announcements, posts or ads on related Facebook, Twitter or social media, use Google ads, or announcements at events, in community blogs, church bulletins and ethnic media. Figure out where your audience is already contributing. Look at related blogs, Google or Yahoo groups, listservs or Pinterest sites, and connect them to your cause.

**Touch people in many ways:** Use multiple community forums to promote your online engagement. Create and post events using e-invites or try a MeetUp, or posting to [local blogs](http://www.seattle.gov/communitiesonline/neighborhoods.htm). Using traditional newspapers, radio or flyers can also let people know your online engagement is coming.

**Reward and nurture contributors:** Reply back to their posts and offer answers or resources, highlight contributors in tweets, newsletters or web sites or at community meetings; let them know when their content has been used; provide badges, discounts or other rewards if possible. Highlight diversity to encourage diversity.

**Let people see the results of their input:** Immediate gratification is best. If you’re running an online poll or survey, display a graphic of the results. If you’ll have the answer later, let people know when**.**

For more ideas, strategies and to sign up for our Community Technology listserv, visit [www.seattle.gov/tech](http://www.seattle.gov/tech) or contact Vicky Yuki at vicky.yuki@seattle.gov, 206-233-7877.

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