

Computer and Internet Caucus

# CDP Guide and New Media Primer

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All labor donated

# {Dedication}

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This primer could not have been created without the following democratic leaders.

Steve Westly



Eric Bauman



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Andrew Lachman



Henry Vandermeir



Kyle Daley



**ActBlue** is the nation's largest source of funds for Democrats. Launched in 2004, ActBlue created and deployed the next generation of online fundraising tools, enabling individuals and groups to raise money for the Democratic candidates and committees of their choice at [www.actblue.com](http://www.actblue.com). In four years, ActBlue has sent more than 420,000 dollars, with a median contribution of only fifty dollars, doing as much to ensure a sustainable Democratic future as any other player in the field.

**ActBlue**



**Aneesh Chopra**

**Aneesh Chopra** is the first US Chief Technology Officer.

The CTO will develop national strategies for using advanced technologies to transform our economy and our society, such as fostering private sector innovation, reducing administrative costs and medical errors using health IT, and using technology to change the way teachers teach and students learn.

**Blog** A **blog** (a contraction of the term weblog) is a type of website, usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. Entries are commonly displayed in reverse-chronological order. “Blog” can also be used as a verb, meaning to maintain or add content to a blog.

Many blogs provide commentary or news on a particular subject; others function as more personal online diaries. A typical blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs, Web pages, and other media related to its topic. The ability for readers to leave comments in an interactive format is an important part of many blogs. Most blogs are primarily textual, although some focus on art (artlog), photographs (photoblog), sketches (sketchblog), videos (vlog), music (MP3 blog), audio (podcasting), which are part of a wider network of social media. Micro-blogging is another type of blogging, one which consists of blogs with very short posts.

## **Why Build a Voter File?**

[[[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voter\\_file](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voter_file)|Voter Files]] are used to identify potential supporters in your local area, sift out voters more likely to support your opponent, and maximize the effectiveness of Get Out The Vote (GOTV) and awareness raising campaigns.

Building and maintaining an accurate voter file will increase the effectiveness of your campaign, save you time and energy, and help you identify and build support for future campaigns.

## **Problems with Voter Files and Campus Activism**

College kids are a transitory bunch. We change addresses just about every year, we may be registered in our home state rather than the state in which we attend school, and frequently we don't have landlines. It makes it hard for local campaigns, state party activists, and even our own campus activists, to efficiently rally us around a cause or turn us out during an election. It also means that the state party's voter file for young voters is basically useless (that is, if you can even get your hands on it). Clearly, if we're going to GOTV our peers on campus, we need a new method.

## **The Solution: FaceBook, Your Campus Registry, Some Elbowgrease**

With a FaceBook account, access to your student registry, and some time, you can build your own voter file that will blow away anything the state party can give you. Here's how you do it:

1. Sign up for FaceBook and join your campus network.
2. Perform an advanced search within your campus network to identify your fellow students and categorize them by their political persuasions (very liberal, liberal, moderate, conservative, very conservative, apathetic).
3. Copy their name and political viewpoints into Excel.
4. Get a copy of your campus registry – online, if possible. This will contain the names, addresses, and phone numbers of all the students at your university.

## **Build a Voter File with FaceBook**

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## **Build a Voter File with FaceBook**

5. If you have an electronic version of the registry, dump this into your Excel document, making sure that the first and last names from the registry occupy the same columns as your data from FaceBook (i.e., all last names from both data sources in column A, all first names in column B). If you don't have an electronic version, you'll have to enter the registry data by hand – a daunting task that will take a lot of man-hours. If this is the case, start by looking up your most hardcore supporters first (those who self identify as “Very Liberal,”) and work your way down the list to less politically intense students.
6. Sort your data by last name (alphabetical).
7. The name/address data from the registry should now match up with the name/political persuasion data from FaceBook. Merge the data as best you can. You can remove Republicans (cut and paste them into a new Excel doc. You never know when this data might come in handy).
8. Prioritize the names. People who are very liberal are your “1's” in political speak – your most hardcore supporters. Next are those who identify as liberals, followed by moderates, then those who are apathetic.
9. You will most likely be left with a lot of names that have no political correlation. What can I say – not everyone is on the FaceBook. These are you “undetermined.” Hopefully you will have removed a lot of Republicans from this list (this is why we searched for data on people of all political persuasions. Undetermined students are of a lower priority in your activities than those who self identify as Very Liberal or Liberal (or even Moderate), but they are another pool of potential supporters.

**And there you go – an accurate, and easily updated campus voter file. Now it's time to start reaching out to those potential supporters.**

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## **Caucus**

**Cau-cus** \ˈko-kəs\ **noun:** a group of people united to promote an agreed-upon cause

### **List of CDP Caucuses**

#### **African-American Caucus**

Darren W. Parker, Chair  
(661) 406-0862  
cdpaachair@aol.com  
www.africanamericancaucus.org

#### **Arab-American Caucus**

Ray S. Saeid, Chair  
(714) 634-4154  
ray@awnews.net

#### **Asian/Pacific Islander Caucus**

Julie D. Soo, Chair  
(415) 260-5886  
jdssfdem@yahoo.com

#### **Business & Professional Caucus**

Alyson L. Abramowitz, Chair  
(408) 523-1222  
ala@ind-alchemy.com

#### **Chicano/Latino Caucus**

Mickie Solorio Luna, Chair  
(831) 673-2009  
vmluna@sbcglobal.net  
www.cachicanolatinocaucus.com

#### **Children's Caucus**

Judy Jacobs, Chair  
(909) 984-8002  
jhhjacobs23@msn.com

#### **Computer & Internet Caucus**

Brigitte Hunley, Chair  
(707) 712-3325  
Brigitte.hunley@gmail.com  
www.cdpic.org



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**Caucus Disabilities Caucus**

August Longo, Chair  
(415) 777-1314  
jp@fdrdems.org

**Environmental Caucus**

Luke Breit, Chair  
(916) 443-5054  
luke@environmentalcaucus.org  
www.environmentalcaucus.org

**Filipino-American Caucus**

Henry Manayan, Chair  
(408) 275-0829  
hmanayan@yahoo.com  
www.filamdc.com/

**Irish-American Caucus**

Thomas Patrick O'Shaughnessy, Chair  
(818) 848-8639  
iwwthom@yahoo.com  
www.irishcaucuscdp.citymax.com

**Labor Caucus**

Jim Gordon, Chair  
(916) 335-2310  
Me112841@pacbell.net

**LGBT Caucus**

Laurie McBride, Chair (North)  
liberal-values@comcast.net

Jess Durfee, Chair (South)  
(858) 277-3367  
chair@sddemocrats.org

**Native-American Caucus**

Helen L. Doherty, Chair  
(909) 592-4783  
kudosforkids@prodigy.net  
www.nativeamericancaucus.com/index.shtml

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**Progressive Caucus**

Mal Burnstein, Chair (North)  
(510) 527-1798  
mb@bt-law.net

Jo Olson, Chair (South)  
(818) 754-0802  
chocojo@sbcglobal.net

www.progressivecaucuscdp.org/

**Rural Caucus**

Jamie Beutler, Chair  
(530) 642-1353  
beutlerjamie@yahoo.com  
www.cdpruralcaucus.org/

**Senior Caucus**

Tony Hale, Chair  
(310) 406-8057  
cademseniorcaucus@gmail.com  
www.cademseniorcaucus.blogspot.com/

**Veteran's Caucus**

Bob Handy, Chair  
(805) 962-9082  
bobcdp10@cox.net

**Women's Caucus**

Lyn Shaw Hilfenhaus, Chair  
(818) 767-6683  
slynshaw@aol.com

**Caucus**

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## **Democracy For America**

**Democracy for America** is our nation's largest progressive political action community. With over 1 million members nationwide, DFA is a grassroots powerhouse working to change our country and the Democratic Party from the bottom-up. They provide campaign training, organizing resources, and media exposure so our members have the power to support progressive issues and candidates up and down the ballot. [DemocracyforAmerica.org](http://DemocracyforAmerica.org)

## **Digital Public Square**

The Office of the Chief Technology Officer has launched the District of Columbia's **Digital Public Square** which puts you, the citizen, in the driver's seat to discover how District agencies work, participate in the democratic process and connect with your government. <http://dps.dc.gov/>

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## **E-mail Etiquette by Henry Vandermeir**

## **E-mail Etiquette**

- Be concise and to the point
- Use proper spelling, grammar & punctuation
- Make it personal
- Use templates for frequently used responses
- Answer swiftly
- Do not attach unnecessary files
- Do not overuse the high priority option
- Do not write in CAPITALS – means you are shouting
- Do not leave out the message thread
- Add disclaimers to your emails
- Read the email before you send it
- Do not overuse Reply to All
- Use the bcc: field or do a mail merge to prevent spamming email addresses
- Take care with abbreviations and emoticons
- Be careful with formatting with rich text and html – not all systems use formatting
- Do not forward chain letters
- Do not request delivery and read receipts
- Do not ask to recall a message.
- Do not copy a message or attachment without permission
- Do not use email to discuss confidential information
- Use a meaningful subject
- Avoid using URGENT and IMPORTANT
- Avoid long sentences
- Don't send or forward emails containing libelous, defamatory, offensive, racist or obscene remarks
- Do not forward virus hoaxes and chain letters
- Keep your language gender neutral
- Don't reply to spam
- Use cc: field sparingly

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**Facebook** **Facebook** is a free-access social networking website. Users can join networks organized by city, workplace, school, and region to connect and interact with other people. People can also add friends and send them messages, and update their personal profiles to notify friends about themselves.

Candidates and activists are more frequently using Facebook to create Pages, Groups and Events.

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**Government 2.0** **Government 2.0** is a new governance construct. Technology enables individuals to participate in the debate and decision making directly – in a forum no further than their own living room or smart phone. With this new level of connectivity we can create a new type of democracy

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**Hashtags** are a community-driven convention for adding additional context and metadata to your tweets. They're like tags on Flickr, only added inline to your post. You create a hashtag simply by prefixing a word with a hash symbol: #hashtag.

Hashtags were developed as a means to create "groupings" on Twitter, without having to change the basic service.

hashtags.org provides real-time tracking of Twitter hashtags. Opt-in by following @hashtags to have your hashtags tracked. Similarly, Twemes offers real-time tracking without the necessity of following a specific Twitter account. Also, with their purchase of Summize, Twitter itself now offers some support of hashtags at their search engine: <http://search.twitter.com>

## **How To Use Hashtags**

First, follow @hashtags on Twitter. They will follow you back automatically, and your hashtags will be tracked.

Next, start using hashtags in your tweets, preceding key words. It can be helpful to do a little research first, to find out if the subject you're tweeting already has an established hashtag.

Finally, track other tweets on the subjects you're interested in (i.e., those containing the appropriate hashtags) by browsing/searching at [Hashtags.org](http://Hashtags.org) or [TwitterGroups](http://TwitterGroups.com). You can set it up with RSS feeds as well.



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- Internet Freebies for Democrats**
- Online Applications**
- Google Docs (Wordprocessing, Spreadsheet, Presentation, Collaboration): <http://docs.google.com/>
  - Thinkfree (Wordprocessing, Spreadsheet, Presentation, Database, Collaboration): <http://www.thinkfree.com/>
  - Avery Labels (Online Label Creator for Avery labels): <http://www.avery.com/us/print/>
  - YouTube (Online Video): <http://www.YouTube.com/>
  - Flickr (Online Photo Sharing): <http://www.flickr.com/>
  - Adobe Photoshop Express: <https://www.photoshop.com/express/>
  - Picnik: <http://www.picnik.com/>
- Free Club/County Websites**
- California Democratic Council (Domain, Hosting, Template): <http://www.cdc-ca.org/>
- Listervs and Groups**
- RiseUp.net (email and listservs): <http://www.riseup.net/>
  - Yahoo Groups (Chat): <http://groups.yahoo.com/>
  - Google Groups (Chat): <http://groups.google.com/>
- Fundraising**
- ActBlue (Free Credit Card Processing): <http://www.actblue.com/>
- Push E-Mail**
- Mail 2 Web (Email and MS Exchange): <http://www.mail2web.com/>
- Political Fact Checking**
- <http://www.factcheck.org/>
- Political Donor Tracking**
- Open Secrets: <http://www.opensecrets.org/>
  - California Secretary of State: <http://cal-access.sos.ca.gov/lobbying/>
- California Voting/Election Statistics**
- California Secretary of State: <http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/>
- Free Conference Calls**
- <http://www.freeconference.com/>
- Remote Desktop Access**
- <http://www.logmein.com/>

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**Jawter** (Now at BETA version 0.5) is a set of scripts for the JAWS Screen Reader that allow you to interact with Twitter, the insanely popular micro-blogging social networking site – without the need for any external software. In essence, Jawter turns your screen reader into a Twitter client.

**Jawter: Twitter from Jaws with no software in the middle.**

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**Vivek Kundra**

**Vivek Kundra** is our nations first Federal Chief Information Officer.

The responsibilities of the CIO are to use information technology to transform the ways in which the government does business.

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**Links** [actblue.com](http://actblue.com)  
[adrielhampton.wordpress.com/](http://adrielhampton.wordpress.com/)  
[ariwriter.com](http://ariwriter.com)  
[bebo.com](http://bebo.com)  
[bearflagblue.com](http://bearflagblue.com)  
[blogtalkradio.com](http://blogtalkradio.com)  
[cdpic.org](http://cdpic.org)  
[cadem.org](http://cadem.org)  
[calitics.com](http://calitics.com)  
[dailykos.com](http://dailykos.com)  
[dnc.org](http://dnc.org)  
[facebook.com](http://facebook.com)  
[flickr.com](http://flickr.com)  
[govloop.com](http://govloop.com)  
[linkedin.com](http://linkedin.com)  
[momocrats.org](http://momocrats.org)  
[momsrising.org](http://momsrising.org)  
[mydd.com](http://mydd.com)  
[netrootsnation.org](http://netrootsnation.org)  
[newwestnotes.com](http://newwestnotes.com)  
[ning.com](http://ning.com)  
[openvotingconsortium.org](http://openvotingconsortium.org)  
[orkut.com](http://orkut.com)  
[plaxo.com](http://plaxo.com)  
[shesgeeky.org](http://shesgeeky.org)  
[techpresident.com](http://techpresident.com)  
[twitter.com](http://twitter.com)  
[whitehouse.gov/omb/e-gov/](http://whitehouse.gov/omb/e-gov/)  
[womenscount.org](http://womenscount.org)

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A **mashup** is a Web application that combines data from one or more sources into a single integrated tool. The term Mashup implies easy, fast integration, frequently done by access to open APIs and data sources to produce results that were not the original reason for producing the raw source data. An example of a mashup is the use of cartographic data from Google Maps to add location information to real estate data, thereby creating a new and distinct Web service that was not originally provided by either source.

## **Mashup**

**Micro-blogging** is a form of multimedia blogging that allows users to send brief text updates or micromedia such as photos or audio clips and publish them, either to be viewed by anyone or by a restricted group which can be chosen by the user. These messages can be submitted by a variety of means, including text messaging, instant messaging, email, digital audio or the web.

## **Micro-blogging**

The content of a micro-blog differs from a traditional blog in that it is typically smaller in actual size and aggregate file size. A single entry could consist of a single sentence or fragment or an image or a brief, ten second video. But, still, its purpose is similar to that of a traditional blog. Users micro-blog about particular topics that can range from the simple, such as “what one is doing at a given moment,” to the thematic, such as “sports cars,” to business topics, such as particular products. Many micro-blogs provide short commentary on a person-to-person level, share news about a company's products and services, or provide logs of the events of one's life.

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**Netroots** **Netroots** is a term coined to describe political activism organized through blogs and other online media, including wikis and social network services. The word is a portmanteau of Internet and grassroots, reflecting the technological innovations that set netroots techniques apart from other forms of political participation.

Organizations such as [www.netrootsnation.org](http://www.netrootsnation.org) exemplify this movement.

“Netroots Nation amplifies progressive voices by providing an online and in-person campus for exchanging ideas and learning how to be more effective in using technology to influence the public debate. Within that campus, we strengthen community, inspire action and serve as an incubator for progressive ideas that challenge the status quo and ultimately affect change in the public sphere.”

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**Orkut** is a social networking service which is run by Google and named after its creator, an employee of Google – Orkut Büyükkökten. The service states that it was designed to help users meet new friends and maintain existing relationships. Orkut is similar to other networking sites. Since October 2006, Orkut has permitted users to create accounts without an invitation.

**Orkut**

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“We must use all available technologies and methods to open up the federal government, creating a new level of transparency to change the way business is conducted in Washington, and giving Americans the chance to participate in government deliberations and decision-making in ways that were not possible only a few years ago.”

*From Barack Obama's campaign platform  
on technology*

**Platform**

A **party platform**, is a list of the actions which a political party supports in order to appeal to the general public for the purpose of having said party's candidates voted into office. This often takes the form of a list of support for, or opposition to, controversial topics. Individual topics are often called planks of the platform.

**Party Platform**

**Resolution** RESOLVED, that the “Resolved” statement should stand alone and the action proposed therein should be clearly understood by the reader without having to refer back to the “Whereas” statements.

**Part II: Tips**

Please keep them brief and to the point. Avoid making your resolution into a speech or textbook. One, two or three “whereas” clauses should be plenty adequate to make your point and explain why you want a “resolved statement.”

Please also keep in mind that resolutions tend to be either local, state or national issues. Please do not keep folks guessing as to where you think this resolution falls in those three broad areas.

Resolutions should provide enough information to explain why they are being made but should not attempt to be exhaustive on the subject.

begins with WHEREAS, and is followed by a semi-colon. The final WHEREAS ends with a semi-colon followed by “therefore be it”.

The RESOLVED portion of the resolution states the action that you propose to address the problem identified in the WHEREAS portion of the resolution. Because resolving most problems involves an exercise of judgment, this is the portion of the resolution where the author expresses their opinions. If the author proposes more than one solution, each separate solution to the problem should be listed as a separate sentence or paragraph that begins with the word “RESOLVED”. When a resolution contains multiple “RESOLVED” statements, they are linked by the phrase “and be it further” at the end of each RESOLVED statement, except the last one. When properly written, this section “stands alone” or clearly restates the problem in summary form and explains to the reader the action necessary to address that problem, without having to refer back to the “Whereas” statements.

**SAMPLE RESOLUTION**

WHEREAS, this is the part of the resolution that explains the issue or problem; and

WHEREAS, each resolution should address only one issue or problem; and

WHEREAS, each “Whereas” statement should address only one fact, idea or supporting argument related to the issue or problem; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that this is the part of the resolution that restates the basic issue or problem and proposes a solution to the issue or problem identified in the “Whereas” statements; and be it further

RESOLVED, that each “Resolved” statement should address a separate action to be taken or solution proposed to resolve the issue or problem; and be it further

**Resolution**

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**Resolution** A **resolution** is a written motion adopted by a deliberative body. The substance of the resolution can be anything that can normally be proposed as a motion. For long or important motions, though, it is often better to have them written out so that discussion is easier or so that it can be distributed outside of the body after its adoption. An alternate term for a resolution is a resolve.

Resolutions are commonly used in corporations and houses of legislature.

General suggestions on how to write a resolution, including sample format

## **Part I: A Primer on Writing Resolutions**

One of the real benefits of participating in the democratic process is the opportunity to have a voice regarding the public policy issues that affect our lives. It is therefore important that citizens understand the correct procedure for drafting resolutions. Some people are intimidated at the idea of writing a resolution. They shouldn't be. It isn't that difficult.

The following guidelines can help you write and adopt successful resolutions:

- A resolution is a statement of policy or position on an issue.
- Each resolution should have a clear and concise title.
- Each resolution should address only one issue.

The goal of the resolution is to inform and educate the reader in order to inspire them to take action approving the resolution. To do this, a successful resolution must do two things:

1. identify and explain the problem that needs to be addressed (the WHEREAS portion) and
2. propose a solution that will address the problem as identified (the RESOLVED portion).

The first portion of a resolution identifies and states the problem that needs to be addressed. The problem should be stated in factual terms. Opinions are not expressed in this portion of the resolution. Each fact should be listed as a separate sentence or paragraph that

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## **Social Media**

19. Transparency, participatory, collaborative – these terms do not refer only to the end state; they refer to the process used to get there as well. It's ok to have debates, arguments, and disagreements about the best way to go about achieving "Government 2.0." Diverse perspectives, opinions, and beliefs should be embraced and talked about openly.

20. It's not enough to just allow negative feedback on your blog or website, you also have to do something about it. This might mean engaging in a conversation about why person X feels this way or (gasp!) making a change to an outdated policy. Don't just listen to what the public has to say, you have to also care about it too.

**Social networking** focuses on building online communities of people who share interests and/or activities, or who are interested in exploring the interests and activities of others. Most social network services are web based and provide a variety of ways for users to interact, such as e-mail and instant messaging services.

## **Social networking**



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**Social Media**

10. Be humble. You don't know everything so stop trying to pretend that you do. It's ok to be wrong.
11. But, be confident. Know what you know and don't back down. You will be challenged by skeptics and others who do not care and/or understand social media. Do not let them discourage you.
12. There are true social media champions throughout the government. Find them. Talk to them. Learn from them.
13. Government 2.0 is not a new concept. It's getting so much attention now because social media has given a voice to the ambitious, the innovative, and the creative people within the government.
14. Social media is not about the technology but what the technology enables.
15. Social media is not driven by the position, the title, or the department, it's driven by the person. Stop trying to pigeon-hole into one team or department, and instead think of a way to bring together people from across your organization.
16. Instead of marketing your social media capabilities, skills, experience, platforms, software, etc. to the government, why don't you try talking with them? An honest conversation will be remembered for far longer than a PowerPoint presentation.
17. Today's employees will probably spend five minutes during the workday talking to their friends on Facebook or watching the latest YouTube video. Today's employees will also probably spend an hour at 10:00 at night answering emails or responding to a work-related blog post. Assume that your employees are good people who want to do the right thing and who take pride in their work.
18. Agency Secretaries and Department Heads are big boys and girls. They should be able to have direct conversations with their workforce without having to jump through hoops to do so.



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**Social Media**

1. The risks of social media are greatly outweighed by the risks of NOT doing social media.
2. Your Government agency/organization/group/branch/division is not unique. You do not work in a place that just can't just use social media because your data is too sensitive. You do not work in an environment where social media will never work. Your challenges, while unique to you, are not unique to the government.
3. You will work with skeptics and other people who want to see social media fail because the transparency and authenticity will expose their weaknesses.
4. You will work with people who want to get involved with social media for all the wrong reasons. They will see it as an opportunity to advance their own their careers, to make more money, or to show off. These people will be more dangerous to your efforts than the biggest skeptic.
5. Younger employees are not necessarily any more knowledgeable about social media than older employees. Stop assuming that they are.
6. Before going out and hiring any social media "consultants," assume that there is already someone within your organization who is actively using social media and who is very passionate about it. Find them, use them, engage them. These are the people who will make or break your foray into social media.
7. Mistakes can and will be made (a lot). Stop trying to create safeguards to eliminate the possibility of mistakes and instead concentrate on how to deal with them when they are made.
8. Information security is a very real and valid concern. Do NOT take this lightly.
9. Policies are not written in stone. With justification, passion, and knowledge, policies and rules can and should be changed. Sometimes it's as easy as asking, but other times will require a knockdown, drag-out fight. Both are important.

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**Transparency** When we talk about **transparency** in government, we mean that citizens must be able to “see through” its workings, to know exactly what goes on when public officials transact public business. Government that is not transparent is more prone to corruption and undue influence because there is no public oversight of decision making. Gov 2.0 leaders utilize new media tools to foster transparency.

**Twitter** **Twitter** is a free social networking and micro-blogging service that enables its users to send and read other users’ updates known as *tweets*. Tweets are text-based posts of up to 140 characters in length which are displayed on the user’s profile page and delivered to other users who have subscribed to them (known as *followers*). Senders can restrict delivery to those in their circle of friends or, by default, allow anybody to access them. Users can send and receive tweets via the Twitter website, Short Message Service (SMS) or external applications.

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**URL shorteners**, such as bit.ly and tinyurl, are services that help take longer URLs (which can be over a hundred characters long) and transform them into manageable links that almost never exceed 20 characters. URL shorteners are not new – TinyURL has been around since 2002. But their popularity has skyrocketed with the rise of Twitter which only allows for 140 characters in any message.

**URL Shorteners**

An **unconference** is a facilitated, participant-driven conference centered around a theme or purpose. The term “unconference” has been applied, or self-applied, to a wide range of gatherings that try to avoid one or more aspects of a conventional conference, such as high fees and sponsored presentations. For example, the term applied to diverse events including BarCamp, Bloggercon, Shesgeeky and Mashup Camp.

**Unconference**



**Voter Education** The **My Vote Democracy At Work Project** invites organizations and employers to help strengthen our democracy by engaging in nonpartisan outreach to encourage their members, employees and customers to take part in elections. It offers ideas designed to spark creativity for spreading the word about voting, and a MyVote Election Information website button that links to the Secretary of State's website. There, people will find the tools and information they need to become active and informed voters.

<http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/myvote-democracy-at-work-project.htm>

The **California Voter Foundation** is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization promoting and applying the responsible use of technology to improve the democratic process.

<http://www.calvoter.org>



## **Guidelines for Organizational Websites by Henry Vandermeir**

## **Websites**

The following are some things to consider when upgrading or creating a club/DCC website:

1. **First and foremost:** As an organization that consists of volunteers and officers that rotate at a minimum of every two years for a DCC (yearly for clubs), the website should NOT be created using any kind of format that requires someone with in-depth knowledge of any programming language such as html, php, java, etc.

A site built from scratch using one of these tools will always be dependent upon a person requiring expertise in those skills to update and maintain it. Not only are these people rare, but it also limits the number of people who can/will be allowed to update the site as needed.

There may be someone in the group who says they can create a website, but regardless of how well-intentioned they may be, resist the urge to let them loose on your website.

Over the last five years as the previous chair of the Computer & Internet Caucus and as now as President of California Democratic Council, I have seen numerous counties and clubs get locked out of their website or can't update them because their webmaster moved, passed away or had personal disagreements with the organization. It is extremely important that the website require little day-to-day maintenance, yet can be easily learned and updated with minimal training.

2. **Don't reinvent the wheel:** There is no need to develop a system from scratch or pay someone a lot of money (money that would be better spent on outreach, candidate development, etc.) to build one. There are many free solutions out there for the type of website required by a county DCC or club. These open source solutions require simple installations and are maintained by a team of developers (see #3) and a large community with support options.





## Websites

3. **Use an open source CMS:** As mentioned in #2, there are a variety of free Content Management Systems (CMS) available to choose from that will more than fit your needs. Using one of the more popular systems, you will find that they have numerous features, templates, strong security, expansion and most importantly, a large community of users/developers that keep the system up-to-date without having to rely on just one or two people (see #1).

These systems contain everything you will need for a site and will have more features/capabilities than you will take advantage of or that can be programmed/implemented by someone developing it from scratch:

- a. **Accessibility** – Because the system does not require programming expertise to maintain, you can designate one or more people to update the site. They do not require any expensive software (i.e., FrontPage, Dreamweaver, etc.) and can be updated through the website from any computer with Internet access. You don't have to worry about people having a Mac or PC as either type of computer can access the system.
- b. **Security** – By having a 'team' of developers and an entire community (some in the millions) to test these CMS systems, security vulnerabilities are quickly caught and remedied.
- c. **Multiple Security Levels** – allows you to create multiple webmasters – each with varying editing authority if needed. Provides for multiple levels of 'groups' that allow you to control who has access to different features. For example, a group called 'Board Members' might have access to certain pages, documents, discussions or downloads that regular members don't.
- d. **Updates/New Features** – Because of the developers and communities, these systems are continuously updated with bug fixes and/or new features.
- e. **Flexibility** – Using a proven and fully developed CMS provides you with a variety of templates and

customization options that can be easily changed from within the system.

- f. **Expandability** – Using an open-source system allows you to expand your website. Because the programmer does not have to deal with developing a full site and is working with proven code, they are able to take full advantage of the system's development tools and quickly create custom features/modules.
  - g. **News Pages** – ability to have an ongoing news submission page. Allows multiple authorized members to submit news, can email news to someone, leave comments and provides RSS feeds so others can subscribe to your news posts via their cell phone or another website.
  - h. **Multiple Built-in Features** – Blogs, chat boxes, discussion boards (forums), event calendars (with subscriptions), link managers, download manager and many more developed by members of the community.
4. **Limit outside services:** Do not use a hodgepodge of different web services to get the job done (i.e., one service for events, one for RSS feeds, one for calendars, etc.). This requires multiple accounts with multiple usernames and passwords to keep track of and brings an inconsistent look to the site. It also means that updates need to be done in multiple locations rather than one central area (i.e., your own website).
5. **Think of future administrations:** What you decide on will be inherited by future DCC/club administrations. If you create a customized system that cannot be easily maintained or updated by future committees who may not have the expertise you have available now, then you have essentially created a one term website. That is why I stress points #1, 2 and 3!

At a minimum, the website should contain the following:

1. About Page: History, officers, bylaws, mission statement can be on one or multiple pages.



## Websites



## Websites

2. Contact Information: Mailing address, meeting date/time, phone number.
3. Contact form: Form to email to officers – should protect individual email address from spam bots.
4. Clubs Page: List of clubs, contact information, websites.
5. Donate Page: Secure page that allows donations, payment of dues/events via credit card.
6. Calendar: Automated calendar that one or more individuals/clubs can add events too, provide for visitors to subscribe to reminders, provides list of events.
7. Online News: Continuous list of ongoing articles/blurbs of what county is/has done.
8. Volunteer Form: Sign-up page for volunteers.
9. Links Page: Links to party and other informational sites.

### Optional items:

1. Discussion Board/Forum: Allows for ongoing discussions between members or private groups (i.e. Board members).
2. Online Newsletter: Allows visitors to subscribe/unsubscribe to an electronic newsletter/mailling.
3. Legislators Page: Information on local/statewide Democratic officials.
4. County/District information page.
5. ... and whatever else you can think of.

What I found is that most organizations 'want' to be more sophisticated than they actually are/will be and that most advanced features have never been touched or die out because of non-use.

I have yet to see ANY county DCC use the full features of a CMS website including large counties such as LA, San Diego, San Francisco, etc.. You will notice that only large national organizations will have all the fancy social interaction and other stuff – and that's because they have the funds to have a full-time support staff!

Follow these simple guidelines and your organization will have a functional website for many years.



**YouTube** is a video sharing website where users can upload, view and share video clips.

The company is based in San Bruno, California, and uses Adobe Flash Video technology to display a wide variety of user-generated video content, including movie clips, TV clips, and music videos, as well as amateur content such as video blogging and short original videos. Most of the content on YouTube has been uploaded by individuals, although media corporations including CBS and the BBC and other organizations offer some of their material via the site. Many candidate speeches and debates are now viewable on YouTube.

## YouTube