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# WALK MS: SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS

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## WHY SOCIAL MEDIA?

Social Media is about connecting, creating, and communicating. We connect individuals by creating a community within the space. These communities allow users to make a connection to one another, to a cause, and to their passions.

Once users have connected via social networks they can begin to communicate with one another and share important, relevant information. For Walk MS and Bike MS participants, users can connect with their friends, family and potential supporters to effectively increase awareness, inspire new members, and encourage others to donate to their walk or ride.

## SOCIAL NETWORKING BASICS

### FACEBOOK

[facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com)

With well over 350 million active users, Facebook is currently the most popular social networking site in the world. Founded in 2004, Facebook is "a social utility that helps people communicate more efficiently with their friends, family and coworkers." The Facebook platform is inherently viral, making it easy to share important news, events, pictures, and more with all of your friends with just one click. This will enable you to spread the word about your upcoming event faster and easier than ever before!

### LINKEDIN

[linkedin.com](https://www.linkedin.com)

LinkedIn promotes itself as a place for professionals to gather and believes that "relationships matter." Users hail from over 150 different industries with an average annual household income of \$100,000. When it comes to an organization such as the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, every dollar counts to help find a cure. LinkedIn has the potential to expose your team and your cause to professionals capable of making a profound contribution. The existence of groups on LinkedIn can help you to connect with others of similar passions and interests who could be potential recruits to the team.

### TWITTER

[twitter.com](https://www.twitter.com)

Twitter is the fastest growing social network. This micro-blogging platform enables you to send 140-character updates about anything you want to anyone "following" you (for example, your Bike MS or Walk MS supporters). The character limit also makes Twitter one of the most mobile and portable social networks, as users can easily send and receive updates via SMS text without having to install a third party application. Finally, tweets (short, 140-character messages sent through Twitter) are searchable through Twitter search, allowing you to find people talking about your interests in real time.



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## MEETUP

[meetup.com](http://meetup.com)

“Do Something. Learn Something. Share Something. Change Something” – that’s the motto of in-person networking site, Meetup. Meetup is designed to connect people with similar interests using the web and then bring them together offline. Once you’ve found potentially interested individuals, you can use Meetup to bring them together as your team for your bike ride or walk.

## PARTICIPANT CENTER

[nationalMSsociety.org](http://nationalMSsociety.org)

The ‘Participant Center’ is provided automatically to Bike MS and Walk MS participants when they register. Participants are instantly connected to all the details you need to know about your upcoming event. From the ability to fundraise, invite your friends to join your cause, check your progress and thank friends individually for their contribution, the MS Society makes it quick and easy to get started with a simple login.

## GETTING STARTED

### FACEBOOK

If you don’t already have a Facebook account, go to [facebook.com](http://facebook.com) and sign up. Use your real name so that you can find people and be found by your friends easily. Upload your custom optimized profile picture to promote your team and spread the word about the event. You probably have a ton of friends on Facebook already that you didn’t even know about, so once you’ve set up your profile use Facebook’s e-mail contacts importer to find them: [facebook.com/find-friends/?ref=sb](http://facebook.com/find-friends/?ref=sb).

Depending on your recruitment and fundraising goals, it could also be beneficial for you to create your own team fan page on Facebook. Pages allow other Facebook users to “become a fan” of your team without having to be your friend on Facebook. To create your page, go to [facebook.com/advertising/?pages](http://facebook.com/advertising/?pages) and click the green button to “Create a Page.” Select the “Non-Profit” category under “Brand, Product, or Organization,” and fill in your page name. We suggest a title that includes both your team name and the name of your ride or walk, as well as one without a date so your fans will stay with you year after year (ex: Rockin and Walkin – Seattle Walk MS). Fill out the information tab and upload your custom optimized profile picture, and you’re ready to go!



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## TWITTER

If you haven't already done so, sign up for a Twitter account at **twitter.com**. Provide the link to join or donate to your team on the "website" section and mention your participation in your ride or walk in your 160-character bio. After you've filled in your profile information, select a photo of you or your team to upload for your profile picture (also called an avatar). Once uploaded, go to **twibbon.com**, login with your Twitter account information, search for Bike MS or Walk MS and select the corresponding Twibbon (a virtual ribbon for your Twitter account photo) to attach to your picture.

Go to **twitter.com/invitations/find\_on\_twitter** to find out if any of your friends or your local MS Society Chapter are already on Twitter and start following them. You can also follow the National MS Society Twitter feed at **twitter.com/MSsociety**. You're now ready to start tweeting!

## LINKEDIN

If you haven't already, go to **LinkedIn.com** to set up a LinkedIn account. Follow LinkedIn's tips for profile completeness and aim to get your profile as close to 100% complete as possible. It's especially important that you have a profile picture that clearly shows your face so that everyone can see who you are.

Click to "Add Connections" on the top right of your page to use LinkedIn's e-mail contacts importer and start building your network. You should also search for and request to join groups related to cycling, charity bike rides, walking clubs, your local chapter, and your local community.

## MEET UP

Register for a free account at **MeetUp.com**. Fill in your profile information, then create a Meet Up for your local Bike MS ride or Walk MS. Be sure to list keywords like multiple sclerosis, MS, MS Society, cycling, bike rides, walking, etc. in your event description so that other people searching for events in your area can easily find yours. Include links to your team page so that those who find your Meet Up can sign up to join or donate to your team right away.

## PARTICIPANT CENTER

If you've officially registered your team for this year's Bike MS or Walk MS, you already have a 'Participant Center'. Log into your My Account (found on your event's website) and get started using the tools provided in the Participant Center. Make sure that the rest of your team is registered as well. You can also connect your Facebook account to your event fundraising webpage by downloading the Fundraise with Facebook app. This application runs through Facebook and allows you to collect donations right from your Facebook profile!



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## BEST PRACTICES

Now that you're set up, here are some tips of how to best utilize these networks to recruit more team members and surpass your fundraising goals:

### FACEBOOK

If you've created both a personal account and a team fan page, your fan page should be fully accessible to you as long as you are logged in. All posts made from your personal account to your fan page will appear as posts from the team/page itself, while posts to your personal profile will appear as posts from you. Our tips for best practices vary slightly between posts to your personal Facebook profile versus posts to your Facebook fan page (if applicable).

#### **From your personal profile:**

- o In addition to your own personal updates, begin posting daily status updates with information about your event, your reason for participating, your training, fundraising progress, and invitations and links to join or donate to your team.
- o Perform a Facebook group search. Start broad (ie "Multiple Sclerosis "MS" "cycling" etc.) and move to more focused searches such as "Walk MS", "Bike MS", "bike rides" and groups focused around your community. Join existing groups and fan pages and post an invitation to join your team on group/page walls.
- o Download the Fundraise with Facebook app through your Participant Center.

#### **From your fan page:**

- o Status updates should be focused around cycling, bikes and equipment, links to news articles about other challenging rides and previous Bike MS events, your team's own training/journey, scheduled team walks, fundraising events, your team's fundraising progress, links to your team page with info on how to join and/or donate, and tips for others looking to participate for the first time.
- o Perform a search to find groups and fan pages for people who are passionate about cycling or walking (try "bike", "walking", or "cycling" as search starts) and also groups associated with MS or the MS Society, especially your local chapter. Join existing groups and fan pages and post an invitation to join your team on group/page walls. Please note: there is no way to post on another group/page or message an individual Facebook user as a fan page – unless you are posting directly to your fan page, you will always send and post messages from your personal account as yourself.
- o Advanced Tip: Message group administrators individually about your upcoming ride and fan page, including ways to join your team or donate. While a post to a group wall could be lost among other posts and may never even viewed by some members, an administrator has the ability to send your invitation directly to all members to ensure that it is received.



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## Twitter

- o Tweet links to important (relevant and factual) articles, updates about your personal (and your team's) training efforts (if applicable), short stories of your experiences in previous years, your fundraising progress and links to donate, and information on how to join your team.
- o Go to **search.twitter.com** and search for keywords like "MS", "MS Society", "Bike MS", "cycling", "bike ride", "Walk MS", and "walking" to see what people are saying. Use the "advanced search" feature to limit your returns by geographic location to ensure you are only viewing conversations happening in your community.
- o Follow users in your area that share your interests, that tweet regularly about MS, or that tweet about their own bike rides or walk events.
- o Join in the conversation by replying directly to users using the "@" symbol immediately before their twitter name.
  - Ex: "@BobSmith I participated in last year's Greater Northwest Chapter Bike MS ride! I have some photos if you're interested"
  - Ex: "@BobSmith Would you be interested in trying this year's Seattle Walk MS? Our team is meeting before hand for coffee at the Village!"
- o Advanced Tip: A "hashtag" is an oft-used topic marker on twitter created by placing a "#" symbol immediately in front of your marker (ex: #MS, #BikeMS, #cycling, #training, #WalkMS, #walking). Search for and use relevant hashtags in your own posts to contribute to existing conversations. Perhaps your chapter is already using an event-specific hashtag – join them by using it as well! Create your own tags to start a conversation of your own and use them in all appropriate posts.

## LINKEDIN

- o Contact those already in your network – particularly those who care about MS (or the person you care about), those whose companies are known to offer donation matching, people who work at charitable organizations, and avid cyclists – with an invitation to support your team.
- o Post discussions on local groups related to MS, charity bike rides or walks with information about the upcoming event and specifics on how members can contribute.
- o Advanced Tip: Perform an advanced search to focus in on more specific keywords that may exist anywhere in a user's personal profile (include keywords such as fundraising, donations, non-profit, etc.) then send invitations to connect with these individuals. When you send an invitation to connect, be sure to write a personalized message to the recipient. You'll be limited on characters, so let them know who you are and that you are participating in this year's ride or walk.



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## MEET UP

- o Select "Find a Meet Up group" and search for bike rides, cycling groups or walking clubs in your area. Join any relevant existing groups and attend upcoming Meet Ups to connect with potential teammates in person.
- o Once you've attracted attendees for your Meet Up, message members regularly with training tips to help them prepare, registration reminders, information on how to join your team, and team fundraising updates to keep them motivated as you draw closer to the event date.
- o Advanced Tip: Search for cycling groups or walking clubs in and around your area and message group organizers to see if they would be interested in getting their group involved whether by joining you at the event, or by donating to your team.

## MY ACCOUNT & PARTICIPANT CENTER

- o Whether you are new to Bike MS or Walk MS, or have been participating for several years, make sure all of your personal and contact information is up-to date and accurate – a complete profile is important!
- o The Participant Center allows you to interact with others on your team, explore the site and utilize its features including messaging team members, emailing contacts, and more.
- o Advanced Tip: Check your personal page regularly to keep track of your progress and find some great information you can incorporate into your updates on Facebook and Twitter.