If you want to reach out to high school and college students, then social networking sites are some of the best tools for the job. Nonprofit organizations are increasingly taking advantage of free social networking sites to manage and grow their networks, build a base, and reach a broader coalition. In fact, social networking sites are growing in popularity with an ever-widening demographic.

Sites such as Facebook and Myspace are free websites that allow people to share information and find organizations and individuals with similar interests. Typically, these contacts are referred to as your “friends.” With such sites, you can post photos, create groups, send invitations to your events, and write messages to other members. They are a way to stay in contact with existing friends and meet new ones by creating a network of contacts. Best of all, creating and maintaining a simple account is very easy!

Some of the ways in which these sites can help nonprofits include:

• Advertise your organization
• Raise awareness of your mission
• Increase traffic to your website
• Publicize upcoming events
• Keep volunteers engaged between events
• Recruit new members and volunteers
• Reach out to youth
• Celebrate successes
• Share information with other nonprofits
• Form coalitions and partnerships with other organizations

Social networking websites may be worthwhile even if you only log on once every few weeks to announce a volunteer opportunity, press release, or fundraiser. If you do not have the time to devote to frequent page maintenance, don’t worry. You can still set up an account to serve as a hub and allow your friends to find each other through your profile.

Think of social network sites as a means of advertising. Sure, the more time and money you invest, the better your returns, but, because profiles are free and basic setup takes very little time, there is almost no reason you should not at least setup a profile. Later you can determine how much time to invest in it.

The success of sites such as Facebook and MySpace is due to the access it gives you to your friends, your friends’ friends, their friends, and so on. To start adding friends, first you have to create a profile for your organization. This is easy to do by following these instructions.

This tutorial is meant to be a basic guide to help you set up a Myspace account and take advantage of its most powerful tools for nonprofit outreach, volunteer recruitment, member action alerts, and image building. This document contains links to online articles documenting how nonprofits have taken advantage of social network websites, what has worked in the past, and what to expect from a new account. Good luck and welcome to Web 2.0!
GETTING STARTED

1. Creating an Account

Go to www.myspace.com. The Myspace homepage is pictured below. Click on “Sign up!” and Myspace will guide you through the start up process. Start by entering your name (or your first name and last initial, if you prefer for more anonymity), email address, and a password for your account. The page is funded through advertising revenue, so be careful to click only on Myspace content like “Home” and “Sign up/Sign In” rather than ads.

Tip: For your username, use the name of your organization instead of your own name. This is how your account will be identified to the Myspace community. For a password, use something other than your email password or Myspace will automatically have access to your email account.
2. Finding Friends

The best way to begin building a base on Myspace is by connecting with individuals you already know. You have the option to allow Myspace to search your email address book for existing contacts who use Myspace. This is a good tool to add friends from the outset, but you can skip this step if you are unsure about supplying your email password.

*Tip:* This feature actually gains access to your email account. For extra security, change your email password after adding friends.

Also, tell your friends, co-workers, family members, and ACT that you have created a Myspace account and ask them to add you as a friend. Once you have notified them, make sure to regularly check the “Friends” area of your page to approve friend requests. Nobody can be a part of your network until you approve their friend requests.

Now that you’ve added friends from your email address book, you’re ready to find other acquaintances online. In Myspace, someone requests to be friends with the other person, but the two are not connected until that second person approves the friend request.

Myspace allows you to search for people and organizations by name, email address, or location. If you know their Myspace username, then it’s even easier! To initiate a friend request, find that person’s profile and select “Add to Friends.” Also frequently check your Myspace mail center to approve incoming requests. For the first few weeks after opening your account, it is a good idea to check your Myspace daily so you can continue to add and approve friends.

When asking friends for their Myspace information, also ask them to alert their friends to your profile and to encourage their friends to add you as a friend as well. Your friends are likely to have Myspace friends who live in your area, so encouraging their association with your Myspace profile gives you an opportunity to recruit new members, donors, and volunteers.
Tip: Add ACT as a friend! Our name is: a_c_trees (www.myspace.com/a_c_trees).
3. Editing Your Profile

Now it's time to edit your profile. For quick setup, simply populate the fields Myspace provides for you. Customizing your Myspace page requires a bit of code and will take time and patience, but many people find it worth their while. Remember to keep it simple and stick to information about your mission. You can use any number of freely provided codes on the internet, but also see Appendix A for starter codes.

A list of some websites where more codes can be found is provided here, and a simple Google search will yield many more:

- http://www.myspacegens.com/
- http://www.lissaexplains.com/myspace/
- http://www.myspacecore.com/

*Tip:* Make sure to include your organization’s website address prominently.
4. Home Page and Maintaining Your Profile

The Home page is not the same as the profile view. Your profile is what others see when they look at your Myspace page. Your Home page is like your control panel; it contains links to your Myspace message center, tool options, and friends’ pages. The following snapshot of a Myspace Home page highlights the most frequently used panels, which will be discussed in more detail.

This area allows you to add photos and videos. It also has the link for creating and updating your Myspace blog.
5. Other Tools

Mailboxes

Mailboxes work much like email accounts, except that they’re only for communicating between Myspace users. Myspace will notify you— to your regular email address— when there is an email in your Myspace mailbox. This feature can also be turned off.

Blogs

Blogs, or web logs, are like public, online journals. When people come to rely on your blog as a source of information, news, or entertainment, then your blog generates traffic to your page and fosters regular visits from the same people. However, to get there entails updating your blog regularly (daily or weekly). Don’t start a blog unless you intend to add regular content.

Possible blog posts include:
- How-to articles on tree planting and maintenance.
- Facts and research about the benefits of trees.
- Events, campaigns, and other promotional information including press releases.
- Human-interest stories on how individuals and communities utilize their urban forests.
- Discussions of recent, relevant news items (include links).
- Discussions of recent policy actions involving or affecting your organization.

Blogs are an increasingly important element of internet communication. For further reading on blogs, visit these sites:
- http://www.pro blogger.net/archives/2005/12/30/tens-tips-for-writing-a-blog-post
- http://blog.maxlowe.net/2008/04/02/7-tips-to-writing-a-crowd-drawing-Myspace-blog

Bulletins

Bulletins are messages you post that go onto a virtual bulletin board that your friends see on their Myspace pages. Only your Myspace friends can see bulletins that you post. Bands frequently use bulletins to announce upcoming gigs. For nonprofits, bulletins are good for highlighting new tools available at your organization, announcing networking opportunities, and advertising upcoming events such as trainings, fundraisers, and volunteer opportunities.
Causes

Causes allows individuals in the social networking community to support your organization financially! This application is the real fundraising power of Myspace. Once you’re listed as a Cause, every visitor to your page- and any friends’ page displaying the Cause button on their profile- has the opportunity to make a charitable donation to your organization.

Any Myspace user can create a Cause, but only 501c3 organizations can accept donations. Myspace users add the Causes application and select a beneficiary verified through Guidestar. If you file an annual Form 990, then likely your organization is registered and able to be linked as a Cause. Network for Good and Just Give process the donations, less a 3% to 4.75% processing fee. To learn more about their requirements and how they process donations, visit the sites referenced in Appendix B.

To begin accepting donations through Myspace Causes, the first step is to setup your organization as a Cause.

1. In the Applications menu, click on Get Apps.
Myspace Tutorial

2. Select “Politics and Causes” from the App Categories menu.

3. Select “Causes” from the Politics and Causes Applications list.

4. From the top right corner of your screen select, “Add this App.” Click “OK” to Add this App, and you’re ready to search existing causes to add to your page or, better yet, create a Cause for your organization and link to that.

5a. Select “Start a Cause” to set up a link to accept donations through Myspace.

5b. Encourage friends and supporters to add your Cause. Direct them to click on “Join Cause,” which allows them to use their Myspace page to support your organization.

Tip: It is not recommended to add Causes benefitting other organizations to your profile as it might confuse visitors who wish to donate to you. However, for individuals and groups who are not 501c3 nonprofits, adding Causes to their page is a networking tool and a way to draw financial support to causes they believe in. In this case, you can support urban and community forestry by listing ACT as the beneficiary if your organization does not qualify.
CONCLUSION

This introduction is a primer for nonprofits on how to create a Myspace profile for promoting your organization and programs through online social networking. Further reading and a dedicated investment of time in managing your account will determine how your network grows. It takes time, but many nonprofits have found that it is worth the effort. Here are some of the ways:

Frequently updating your profile with relevant blog discussions helps to:
- Keep volunteers engaged between events.
- Raise awareness of your mission.
- Increase traffic to your profile and website.

Asking friends and their friends to link to your profile helps to:
- Advertise your organization.
- Form coalitions and partnerships with other organizations.
- Reach out to youth.
- Increase traffic to your profile and website.

Timely bulletins posted to active friends helps to:
- Publicize upcoming events.
- Celebrate successes.
- Recruit new volunteers.
- Promote fundraising activities.

The suite of tools available on Myspace provides many overlapping benefits. As you spend time on the site, you may discover new tools or new uses for the tools listed here. Please share your experiences with ACT as you navigate the world of online networking.

Good luck and welcome to world of Web 2.0!
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APPENDIX A (Sample Design Codes)

Myspace fields more or less display what you type in the boxes under the “edit my profile” menu. However, you need to use HTML codes to do things like change the color of your background, make text bold, add links, skip lines, and- in some cases- add special features. Here are some simple and useful codes freely available.

* Make something **bold**: <b>YOUR TEXT</b>

* Begin text on a new line: YOUR TEXT<br>

* Skip a line before the next line of text: YOUR TEXT<br><br>

* Add a URL to any text: <a href="URL_OF_SITE_HERE">YOUR TEXT</a>

* Insert a picture: <img src="URL_TO_IMAGE">

* To make a plain green background, copy this code and paste it into the “About Me” section:

```html
<style type="text/css">
  .r{} table, tr, td { background-color:BBDD99; } .r{} table table { border: 0px } table table table
  { border:0px } table table table { border-style:solid; border-width:1px; border-color:000000; background-color:FFFFFF; } .r{} table, tr, td, li, p, div { font-family:arial; color:555555; } .btext
  { font-family:arial; color:BBDD99; } .blacktext10 { font-family:arial; color:BBDD99; } .lightbluetext8
  { font-family:arial; color:BBDD99; } .orangetext15 { font-family:arial; color:BBDD99; } .active
  { font-family:arial; color:BBDD99; } .active visited { font-family:arial; color:BBDD99; } .active
  link { font-family:arial; color:BBDD99; } .hover { font-family:arial; color:BBDD99; } .navlink
  { font-family:arial; color:BBDD99; } .navlink visited { font-family:arial; color:BBDD99; } .navlink
  link { font-family:arial; color:BBDD99; } .text { font-family:arial; color:555555; } .whitetext12
  { font-family:arial; color:555555; } a:active, a:visited, a:link { font-family:arial; color:555555; }
  a:hover { font-family:arial; color:BBDD99; } a.navbar:active, a.navbar:visited, a.navbar:
  link { font-family:arial; color:BBDD99; } a.redlink:active, a.redlink:visited, a.redlink:
  link { font-family:arial; color:BBDD99; } p { font-family:arial; font-size:8pt; color:555555; } b
  { font-family:arial; font-size:8pt; color:BBDD99; } i, em { font-family:arial; color:BBDD99; }
  U { font-family:arial; font-size:8pt; color:BBDD99 } U { font-family:arial; font-size:8pt; color:
  555555; letter-spacing: 0; font-style: border; border-bottom: 1pt dashed; border-bottom-
  color:BBDD99;} </style>

<p>layout made by <a href="http://groups.myspace.com/awesomelayoutsbykt">Awesome Layouts By Katie</a></p>
</center> <div style="position:absolute;right:0px;top:0px;width:88px;height:31px;">
  <a href="http://groups.myspace.com/awesomelayoutsbykt"><center>layout made by: Awesome Layouts by Katie</center></a>
</div><a href="http://mylayouts.cc/" target="_self"><img
  src="http://www.mylayouts.cc/images/promote.gif" border="0" alt="Click Here For Myspace Layouts!" />
</a>

APPENDIX B (Related Resources)

Guidestar:
http://www.guidestar.org/
If your organization is not already listed on Guidestar, you can register. Or you can register to update your organization's information. Free accounts are available.

Causes Application Background Information:
http://www.techcrunch.com/2008/05/28/causes-reports-on-its-first-year/

Network for Good:
http://www.groundspring.org/
http://www.networkforgood.org/Npo/fundraising/

Just Give:
http://www.justgive.org/
http://www.justgive.org/html/about/nonprofitFaqS.html#6
http://www.diosacommunications.com/myspacebestpractices.htm
http://www.fundraising123.org/article/10-commandments-myspace-advocacy
http://www.fundraising123.org/article/seven-tips-running-myspace-campaign