

# NET Savvy



A Guide for Lions in the Digital Age

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# Net Savvy

## A Guide for Lions in the Digital Age

This guide is designed to open up the possibilities that the Internet can offer Lions clubs worldwide. It offers suggestions for using the Internet to keep members informed, conducting club business and promoting your club to the public.

# Why use the Internet?

Using the Internet is the perfect way to keep members informed. Whether using e-mail, Web sites or e-newsletters, members stay well connected when leadership uses electronic means to communicate – everyone gets the same information at the same time by the same means.

## How can Lions Clubs use the Internet?

### E-Mail:

Electronic mail, or e-mail, is one of the best and most basic ways of using the Internet to correspond with club members. E-mail enhances intermittent communication between meetings as it can be sent any time and from anywhere. It also enables club members to send the same information to any number of recipients, written and read at the convenience of both the sender and receiver.

Tips for using e-mail:

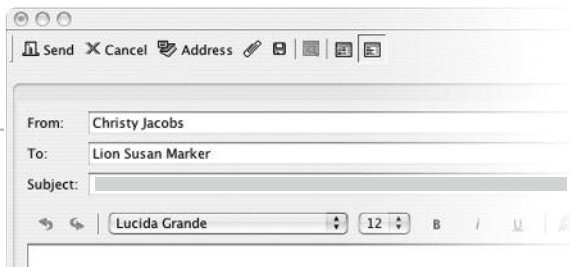
- Keep e-mail lists up-to-date.
- Ensure members know to check their e-mail for club news regularly.
- Provide alternative communication mediums for members that do not use e-mail.

### Minding Your Internet Manners

The Internet has a set of etiquette guidelines, known as “Netiquette”, the do’s and don’ts of online communication. Here are some tips:

- 1) Use Blind Carbon Copy (BCC) when Sending Group E-mails – This means that the long list of e-mail addresses is hidden to each recipient, ensures viruses are not passed on and makes e-mails much shorter for those who like to print them out.
- 2) Use a Meaningful Subject Line
- 3) Keep Messages Short and Formats Simple
- 4) Do Not Write in All Capital Letters – This is considered SHOUTING!
- 5) Avoid Attaching Files – Some people may not understand, or fear opening, file attachments. Other people may not have the necessary software to display the file.
- 6) Reply to E-mails Promptly
- 7) Avoid Forwarding – Only copy and forward messages to those people who really need to see the communication.

Above All: Always abide by the **Lions Code of Ethics**. This applies to all electronic communications.



Make the information in the subject line clear and meaningful.

## Electronic Newsletter

E-Newsletters can be used for a variety of reasons such as recruiting, public relations and keeping members informed. It can be sent to community supporters (both businesses and individuals) and potential members to connect them to your club and its activities.

Excellent topics for your e-Newsletter include:

- Event Calendar (be sure to list upcoming service activities and fundraisers)
- Member Recognition
- Supporter Recognition
- List of Officers
- Who to Contact Regarding Membership
- Fundraising and Service Activity Results
- Club Web Site Address

### Creating Distribution Lists

Creating separate distribution lists makes sending out electronic communications much easier. You can develop these lists using your e-mail software, or there are companies that will manage these lists for you. LionWAP.org, a free service for Lions to develop easy-to-use club Web sites, also has a group e-mail feature so members can update their e-mail list as well as send out group e-mail.

When communicating electronically, consider these e-mail distribution lists:

- All Club Members
- Club Officers
- Club Members, Community Supporters, Potential Members and Other Interested Parties (for club e-Newsletter)



## Club Web Site

Web sites have become the go-to place for people to get information because of their immediacy and accessibility. For Lions clubs, Web sites not only disseminate information to their members, but they get the message out about club activities and membership to the general public and local media.

Do's of Web Sites:

- **Entice People to Take Action:** If you want someone to join your club or donate to your cause, your site has to be informative and visually appealing. Communicate how your club makes a difference. Use photos!



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- **Keep it Simple:** The keys are brevity and a clean design. Do not put too much information on one page as it is difficult to read and will turn off readers. It can't be ugly or confusing to use.
- **Make it Easy to Update:** It should have a tool that makes it easy to change, add new pages and upload photos.
- **Keep it Fresh:** Stay updated and give visitors a reason to stop back. The last thing you want is a prospective member to show up for a meeting at the wrong time and wrong place.
- **Take Caution:** Make sure that everything on your Web site reflects positively on your club and the association. Consider password protection where pertinent.

The most basic club Web site should have:

- **Home Page:** The opening page of the site. The Home Page welcomes people to the site, gives basic information (such as the name and location of the club and when and where the club meets) and contains links to other pages.
- **About Us:** This page gives information about the club, highlighting its mission, service activities, etc. You may also provide brief historical information about the club; such as how long it has been serving the community, how much money the club has raised over the years or how many people have been helped by the club.
- **Calendar:** List of events for both club members and the general public.
- **Membership Info:** Basic information about the benefits of being a Lion and how to become a member. Include contact information for the club's membership chairperson.
- **Contact Us:** The Contact Us page usually contains a direct link to an e-mail address, as well as a phone number. You may also list your meeting time and place again.

Other ideas include:

- **Activities Page:** A page dedicated to current and past service activities – include photos!
- **Fundraisers:** Promote upcoming fundraisers and recognize past fundraising success.
- **Photo Gallery**
- **Media Room or Information Center:** Include downloadable PDFs of your club brochure, fact sheet and history, as well as current news releases.
- **E-newsletter Archive:** Post PDFs of both current and past issues of your club's newsletter.

If your club or district does not have someone with the technical abilities to create a Web site, there is help available:

- LionWap.com (accessible from LionNet.com) has free Web site templates that are easy to use.
- Contact a local high school or university – they might have technology students that would be willing to help.
- Contact a local Web developer to see if the company would be willing to donate a basic Web site design for the club, or reduce their rates.

As with any club materials, be sure to carefully proofread your Web site before it is released for public viewing.

## **Cyber Lions Clubs**

A Cyber Lions Club is a Lions club that meets primarily via the Internet and conducts business online. Carrying out business online helps keep Lions connected, expedites club administration and can help a club get to the business of serving their communities quicker.

### **Benefits of Conducting Lions Business Online**

- Expedite Administrative Duties
- Expedite Decisions
- Reduce Costs: Meetings, Mailings, Dues, etc.
- Increase Meeting Attendance
- Greater Convenience to Members
- Easier to Meet More Often if Needed

### **Chartering a Cyber Club**

A Lions club that meets solely via the Internet and conducts business online can be chartered just like a traditional club. You will need:

- 20 or more charter members
- A sponsoring club, district cabinet or district committee, region or zone
- Your district governor's approval
- Completed charter application
- Appropriate charter fees

A club may also choose to create a cyber branch of its own club. Cyber Lions clubs may even have members from different parts of the world in the same club, working together toward a common goal.



# Conducting Club Business Online

Cyber and Internet savvy clubs carry out business and handle administration electronically, and then get together, if permissible, to perform service activities and conduct fundraisers.

Here are ways that clubs can conduct club business via the Internet:

## Message Board

A message board, commonly known as an Internet forum, is a place for members to talk. Divided by topic, message boards allow club members to communicate in their own time and at their own pace. Items posted on a message board remain there until they are deleted or archived by the moderator.

## Chat Room

Chat rooms are a meeting place where members can connect in real time conversation. They can be used to conduct club meetings, discussions and brainstorming sessions. Most networks and online services offer chat features, many free of charge. Some chat software can even record and post club-meeting conversations to a Web page for later viewing, providing an option for Lions that were unable to chat.

## Members Only Area

Post meeting minutes, club budget and other pertinent club administrative information. Although a password is needed, members should be able to easily access this information, keeping everyone informed. Your chat room can be located in this area as well.

## Blog

A blog, or Web log, is an online journal. Blogs give clubs another opportunity to communicate. Some good ideas for blog topics include an up close look at one of your service projects, the benefits of being a Lion, a member profile, interesting tidbits about your club and testimonials about your club or volunteering. Blogs are generally written in an informal, conversational style. To be effective, blogs should be updated regularly.



Note – both message boards and chat rooms need to be carefully monitored and should be password protected.



## Holding an Effective Chat Session

A chat room on your Web site can be used for numerous purposes – club meetings, brainstorm sessions, guest speakers, etc. In order for chat sessions to be both productive and interesting, consider the following:

- Publicize the date and time of the chat to members.
- Develop an interesting topic.
- Make sure all members understand the procedure for logging on to a chat.
- Consider conducting a “Webinar” (lecture or seminar transmitted over the Web) with a guest speaker.
- Have someone moderating the chat to keep the conversation relevant and flowing.
- If your club’s budget permits, use video teleconferencing technology to add a visual element to your chats.



A club doesn’t need to be a cyber club to conduct some, or all, of their business online. Even traditional Lions clubs can conduct club business online, providing they amend their constitution and bylaws as provided in the following sample resolution:

“BE IT RESOLVED” that (your club name) Lions Club may transact business by electronic mail (or chat rooms), provided that no such action shall be effective until approved in writing by majority of the members of the club. Such action may be initiated by the president or (consider including the current directors) of the said club, but votes thereon to be valid, must be received by the secretary within 10 days of the original e-mail.”

By adopting the above resolution, clubs may take quick action on items needing immediate attention. Even if a club intends on maintaining their traditional meeting schedule, allowing for online business transactions if the need arises.

As with a traditional meeting, Lions clubs conducting business online must have a quorum to vote.

## Fundraising

Since the Internet opens a Lions club to a wider public audience, online activities make it easier than ever for Lions to raise more funds. With so many people using the Internet to conduct their daily business –online fundraising offers a convenient way for the public to participate and support your club.

Some ideas for online fundraising include:

### Online Shopping Mall:

Clubs negotiate with popular online merchants to give a percentage of their online sales to purchasers who enter their site by using the Lions club site as a portal. This is a very convenient way for the public and club members to support the club by taking advantage of their regular shopping habits. Keep in mind that clubs must abide by the association's trademark policies, searchable online or available from the Legal Division by calling (630) 571-5466, ext. 299, or e-mailing [legal@lionsclubs.org](mailto:legal@lionsclubs.org).



### Selling Tickets Online:

Clubs can sell raffle tickets or fundraising event tickets online, opening up the opportunity to more people. In order to do this, clubs need to set up an online credit card payment system. There are many companies that can help do this at a reasonable cost.

**DISCLAIMER:** Please be advised that raffle laws vary considerably by jurisdiction. Each jurisdiction has different requirements about the organizations that are allowed to hold a raffle and the manner in which it is conducted. Please do your research and ensure that your raffle is conducted in accordance with the local raffle laws of your jurisdiction. Information in this guide is not meant as a substitute for advice given from a licensed attorney. It is best to consult with an attorney who has experience in this area to ensure compliance with local rules and regulations. No warranties or guarantees are implied or expressed.

### Auction:

Clubs can earn money by auctioning items on their site, or using an online service such as eBay. If selling items bearing the Lions name or logo, clubs must seek permission and/or license from the Club Supplies and Distribution Division at Lions Clubs International. Please call (630) 571-5466, ext. 252, or e-mail [clubsupplies@lionsclubs.org](mailto:clubsupplies@lionsclubs.org).

When holding a fundraiser online, it's important to publicize it using your club's typical communications vehicles. The greater the exposure of the fundraiser, the better potential for success.

## Promoting Your Club

The Internet is a vital component to your club's communication strategy. Your primary means of communicating electronically to the public will be your Web site – that is why it is so important that it is relevant, well written, thoughtfully organized and easy to navigate.

Put your club's Web site address on everything your club produces: stationery, flyers, posters, news releases, brochures, business cards, etc. The more your Web address is publicized, the greater likelihood people will turn to it to seek more information.

When publicizing activities, consider how the Internet can fit in with your other communications vehicles:

- Create a “News Flash” section on your home page to highlight upcoming activities and fundraisers. Link the “News Flash” to the corresponding news release or fundraising page.
- Grow your club's database by having a guest book or registration option on your site to receive news flashes directly via e-mail. Send out messages as appropriate. You can also ask for this information during public service activities and fundraisers. The more people your club can reach, the better.
- Use e-mail to distribute news releases to the media.
- Link your club's Web site to your community's Web site. Research other community organizations' Web sites (such as the chamber of commerce) and link as appropriate.
- Use the public relations resource materials available on the Lions Clubs International Web site.

## Promotional Materials available from LCI's Web Site

The Lions Clubs International Web site ([www.lionsclubs.org](http://www.lionsclubs.org)) contains a wealth of promotional information and resources. Using the online public relations tools and resources, highlighted below, will get your club started on your public relations plans. To access, select “PR Tools” from the “Communications” menu on the LCI homepage.



Using the online public relations tools and resources will get your club started on your public relations plans.

#### PR Tools & Resources:

- Review the LCI calendar of events for upcoming programs to promote locally.
- Customize sample news releases for Lions activities and programs. The fill-in-the-blank templates provide direction for the release content, layout and length. Localize and submit the release to the media for your next Lions event.
- Create your own club fact sheet using the online template, or use it as a guideline to create a district or multiple district fact sheet. Keep it up-to-date and distribute it with all media material. The club fact sheet is also useful to distribute at club and community events to members and prospective members.
- Show audiovisual presentations at upcoming meetings or events. Many are available for Lions and non-Lions audiences.
- Distribute public service announcements (PSAs) available for television and radio.
- Utilize brochure paper, print ads and billboard artwork to promote Lions in your community.
- Create a club Web site to promote upcoming events and attract prospective members.
- Check “Public Relations Support for Clubs and Districts” to find other resources

Lions Clubs International also provides a variety of member communications and valuable tools for assisting Lions public relations initiatives.

#### Online communications include:

- Lions Clubs International’s fact sheet, history and news releases
- Lions Clubs International’s key messages and questions
- THE LION Magazine, published ten times a year, posts selected articles online. Read “How To Get In THE LION” to submit club, district and multiple district stories and photos
- e-Newsletter, a monthly online newsletter, with the latest communication from International Headquarters
- President’s Monthly Message
- Lions in Action, highlights unique Lions club projects and provides a resource of ideas that may be implemented in your hometown.

The Club Public Relations Chairperson’s Guide“ (PR710) and “District Public Relations Chairperson’s Guide“ (PR730) are also available for information and samples for developing your PR plan and communications.

Read “How To Get In THE LION” to submit club, district and multiple district stories and photos.



# Managing Your Club Roster and Reporting with the WMMR

The Web Monthly Membership Reporting (WMMR) system makes membership updating easy and convenient. LCI encourages use of the WMMR and offers three easy-to-follow guides:

- **Activity Guide** for getting started
- **Quick Reference Guide** for membership changes
- **Family Unit Guide** for reporting family members

To access the WMMR site and links to the reporting guides, go to the LCI homepage and select “Submit Membership and Activity Reports” from the blue left-hand column. Password and access assistance is also available.



## For More Information

For more information about Cyber Lions clubs, e-mail the New Clubs & Marketing Department at Lions Clubs International at [newclubs@lionsclubs.org](mailto:newclubs@lionsclubs.org) or call 630-571-5466, extension 522.

To learn more about the Internet, the best strategy is to go online and “surf” (visit Web pages).



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