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ACTION SHEET: CONNECTING ONLINE WITH YOUR POD

There are many ways to keep in touch with your Pod members between events, some of which may also work to attract new people to join your Pod. We recommend that you start with Step 1 to build a solid foundation for communicating with Pod members. When you are ready to expand your Pod's reach, move to Step 2.

Step 1: Build the Pod Contact List

We encourage each Group Leader to retain a list of Pod member phone numbers and email addresses. *People respond best to personal contacts.* In order to establish your Pod, we recommend you focus first on having the ability to connect with Pod members personally (email, phone, in-person). Most people respond well to email. Plan on sending periodic emails, and use them to promote your events and to establish a supportive base of members.

Mailing List

Cost: Free

Creating a mailing list can be easy. We've outlined the basic steps below. If you store this information using an online service such as Google Sheets, you can access the list from any computer, share it with co-leaders, and avoid the risk of losing the list if your computer crashes.

1. Storing member emails: We recommend using a spreadsheet or [Google Sheets](#).
 - Set up the sheet so that each email address is in a cell in a single column. You may also wish to include other information about your members, such as their names and phone numbers. Place this info in additional columns.
2. Sending messages:
 - Select the column with the email addresses and click "Copy" (available in the "Edit" menu).
 - Open your email account and start composing a new email message. Paste the email addresses into the email address field. If using a Gmail account, it will automatically separate each email address.





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- If you send an email to everyone using “To” or “CC”, all recipients will be able to see everyone else’s email addresses. If one recipient clicks “reply all” when they respond to your message, their response will go to everyone you emailed. If multiple people send messages by replying to all, the number of messages could unintentionally frustrate some members. We recommend you only use “To” or “CC” to email your co-leaders.
- If you send an email using “BCC” instead, each person will receive an email as if they were the only person on the list. Unless you wish to start a discussion among Pod members via email, we recommend using “BCC” to communicate with members.

Step 2: Creating an Online Pod Presence

When you’re ready to broadcast your Pod to the larger community, there are many options available, some free and some with fees. For Pods in larger cities, these options, such as Facebook, can connect you to large existing organizations that will happily help broadcast your message on their groups and pages. Larger groups might also add additional forms of communication like Meetup, MailChimp, or Eventbrite.

Open Tribe - www.opentribe.com

Cost: Free

OpenTribe is a new alternative to Facebook created by PlantPure Inc. with the intention of creating a user friendly interface that facilitates the sharing of revolutionary ideas that create local change. From the [OpenTribe Mission](#):

“We will not measure our success by the amount of time you spend on this website, but rather, by the time you spend with others, solving problems in your community.

We also will measure success by the ripples created by our most successful innovators. OpenTribe was created so that success in one community could be captured on media and replicated elsewhere. Our goal is to launch a massive cycle of social invention and learning.

Importantly, we respect your privacy. We do not spy on our users to gather marketing data; we have a different financial model. We earn revenue from the sale of educational programs and healing foods.”

1. Once you have set up an account on OpenTribe, click the [“Apply to Start a Group”](#) button to add your Pod to the site. Make sure to answer “PlantPure Communities” in response to the question “Which organization are you affiliated with?”
2. Engage in projects with your Pod as you share resources and collaborate on solutions across the globe and within your community.
3. Schedule online events with the free video chat software offered through the platform (for smaller events and Pod meetings, limited to 50 people). You can use other video conferencing options like Zoom or Google as well.
4. Reach out to your Regional Manager with questions related to OpenTribe!



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Facebook - www.facebook.com

Cost: Free

Facebook allows you access to like-minded individuals with the click of a few buttons. Whether you like Facebook or not, we can all agree that it has an all-in-one atmosphere for event planning that helps drive turnout.

1. Setting up: Choose whether you would like to create a “Group” or “Page” or both.

- **Group** - groups allow for discussion among members. You can decide whether you would like to approve all member posts, or whether members can post without approval. You can also decide whether you want your group to be “public” or “private.” Instructions can be found in this [article](#) and/or [video](#).
- **Page** - allows you to post and allows others to follow. You would be the only one who can post and you would need to approve all member posts and publish them under your own name. Instructions can be found in this [article](#) and/or [video](#).
- *If your intent is to create conversation and to allow Pod members to share pictures and stories about their journey on the WFPB lifestyle, **we recommend that you create a “group.”** Pages are primarily used by businesses or organizations. Some Pods have decided to create a page in addition to creating a group. Few Pods create a page without having a group, as it can make group conversation difficult.*

2. Promoting events on Facebook

- If you intend to advertise your event publicly to a large community, then we suggest that you create an event on your personal Facebook page and then share that link to others in the community. This is most important if your Pod is located in a large city with other active Facebook pages. If you create an event in your group, then only those who join your group can attend the event. If you create an event in a private group, then only your private group will know about the event.
- By hosting public events on your personal Facebook page and sharing the link on other popular pages, you can popularize your Facebook group while also advertising the event.
- To create an event on your personal page, go to your news feed (click the Facebook logo on the top left) and [follow these instructions](#).
- If you have any questions about creating a group or event on Facebook, reach out to your regional manager.



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Meetup - www.meetup.com

Cost: ~\$100 for 6 months or up to \$35 a month for Meetup Pro

Meetup is a platform for finding and building local communities. People use Meetup to meet new people, learn new things, find support, get out of their comfort zones, and pursue their passions, together. (Description from Meetup.com)

1. Setting up: Go to Meetup.com and follow their instructions under “Start a Group.”
2. Considerations:
 - **The basic plan costs ~\$200 a year to host 3 Meetup groups.** Pods can team up and split the cost of the Meetup allowing each Pod access to a single group for \$65 a year. In addition, Pods who use Meetup often ask for a donation from members to help cover the cost of the Meetup account.
 - **Like Facebook, you might have a large Meetup with low turnout.** Pods tell us that although their Meetup might have 200 people, few members actually engage over the platform. People can create a free account and join meetups all over the world without paying. A Meetup will not guarantee an active group (nor will a Facebook group).

Google Groups - groups.google.com/forum/

Cost: Free

All of your discussions in one place: Organize with favorites and folders, choose to follow along via email, and quickly find unread posts. Use rich-text editing to customize your posts with fonts, colors, and images. Use photos, nicknames, and automatic translations to share your thoughts with the world. (Description from Google) It is possible to access Groups from anywhere using your [Mobile device](#).

1. Choose the type of Group you want: Email list, Web Forum, Q&A Forum, or Collaborative Inbox.
2. Choose whether you want the Group visible to anyone on the web or just the Group members.
3. You can organize your discussions by topic and choose who can search for topics.
4. You can control who can post and who can join the group.

Mailchimp - www.mailchimp.com

Cost: Free for up to 2,000 contacts and 10,000 emails per month (with ads). There are fees for plans with more contacts, emails, and advanced automation.

Mailchimp can help you keep track of new members, allows members to subscribe and unsubscribe, allows you to address each individual by their name, and shows who opens the emails.

1. Setting up: Visit the [Mailchimp 101 page](#) for details.
2. Import your email list into the platform.



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EventBrite - www.eventbrite.com

Cost: Free

Since Pod events are typically free (or request donations to cover costs) you can use Eventbrite to advertise events. You can use this in addition to other methods, and it can help get the word out to those who do not use Facebook.

Create your own Website

A website is an excellent way to share information and events with Pod members and the general public. There are many options for creating a website, some of which cost money. Consider using [Wordpress](#), [Wix](#), or [Squarespace](#).

Other websites or services to consider

[Group texting](#) - Phone needed. This option could be good for a small group chat (10 people or less) and works for quick communication with short, to-the-point messages. With larger groups, there would likely be too many messages each day.

[Messenger](#) - Owned by Facebook. This option works well for a small group chat (10 people or less), making it easy to share articles, events, and photos. With larger groups, there would likely be too many messages each day.

[WhatsApp](#) - Owned by Facebook. A great option for international Pods. This app could be good for a small group chat (10 people or less) and makes it easy to share articles and photos. With larger groups, there would likely be too many messages each day.

[GroupMe](#) - This app creates a private chatroom for anyone in your group, allowing you to keep in regular contact with members and encouraging more regular conversation among members. Keep in mind that it works best for people who have smartphones. Those without a smartphone might find it overwhelming if there are many messages sent each day.