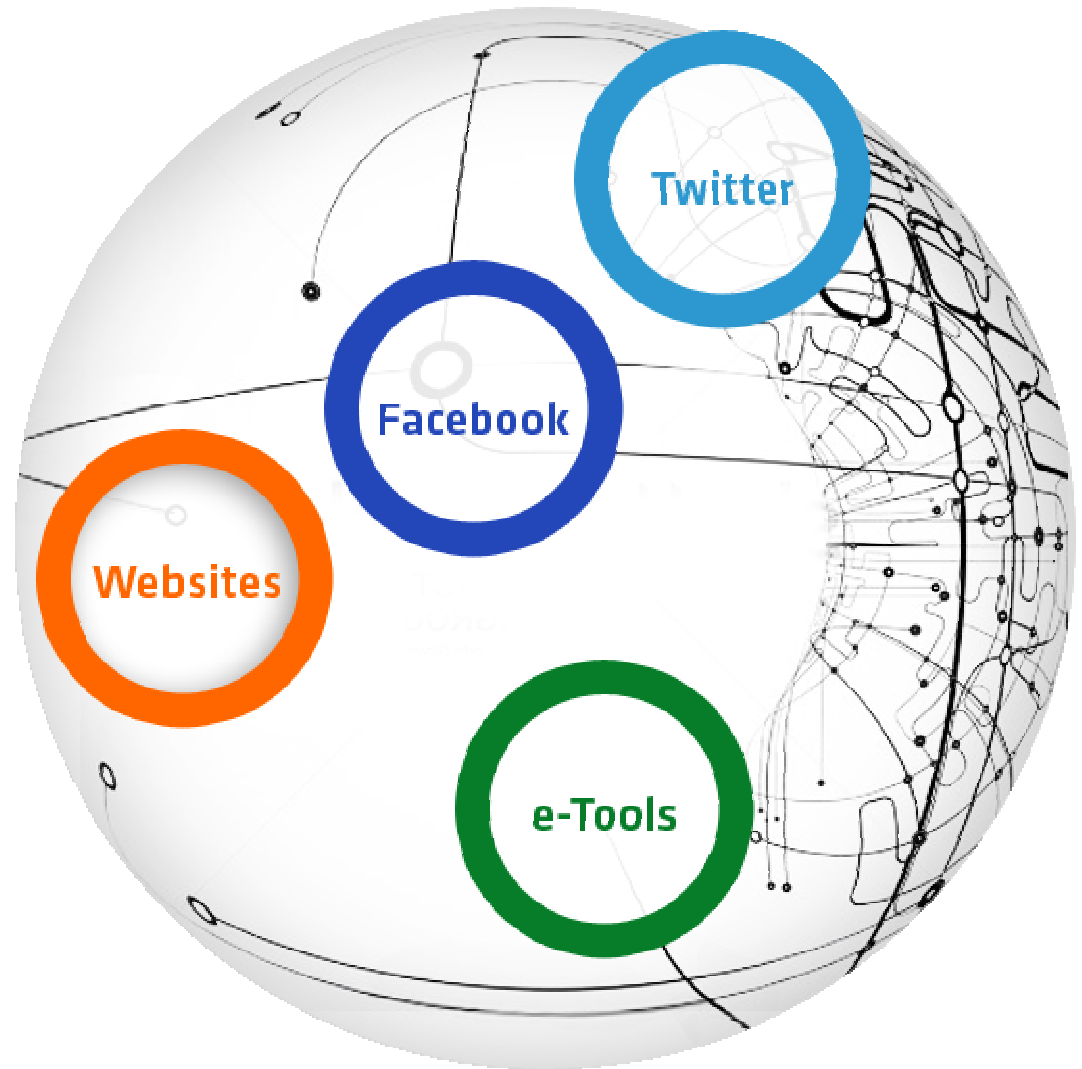The most effective online tools for grassroots organizing groups are the *trailing* technologies – websites, e-tools, Facebook, Twitter – not emerging or disruptive technologies.

Allen Gunn
Founder, Aspiration Tech

I start by spending a lot of time learning the fundamentals and architecture of a piece. I have to have a thorough understanding of the heart of the music before I can improvise.

Bill Evans
Jazz Pianist

An **ecosystem** is a community of living organisms (plants, animals, microbes, *and people*) in conjunction with the nonliving components of their environment (things like air, water, mineral soil, *and tools*), interacting as a system.

The word ecosystem captures the essence of the online world because it's about:

- Complexity
- Interactivity
- Living and nonliving elements, and
- Systems

It's useful to conceive of our online work as being composed of three core elements:

- **The tools**
- **The content**
- **The mechanics**

The Tools

- **Databases**
- **Websites**
- **E-Advocacy Tools**
- **Facebook**
- **Twitter**

The Content

- **Text**
- **Still Images**
- **Video**

The Mechanics

Double meaning:

- A mechanic—a person who makes things work

- Mechanics—the practical nuts and bolts of how things work

Questions Related to Your Online Choices

- **Meta/strategic questions – the *why***

- **Tactical questions – the *what***

- **Practical questions – the *how***

Meta/Strategic Questions:

- How can I best use online tools to build to scale?

- Are we reaching people in a way that's actually building our base?

- Is there any evidence that we're moving more people to action?

- How do we present complex ideas online?

- How do we align and integrate our online and offline work so they build on and amplify each other?

- How do our online activities advance our over-arching strategy and goals?

Tactical Questions:

- **What's the best tool to reach our audience?**
- **What's the best time to send things out?**
- **What's the best way to get people's contact information?**
- **What do we do next?**

Practical Questions:

- **Who's going to get this specific piece of work done?**
- **How do we generate the content we need?**
- **How do we get the data we need?**
- **Do we have the skills and resources to do what we want to do?**
- **If not, how do we get them?**

More Critical and Deep Questions:

- **What's the role of this tool? What function does it play? What does it do best?**

- **How does this tool relate to the other core online tools?**

- **What primary audience(s) does this tool reach best?**

- **What tone/emotion works best with this tool?**

- **What skills are needed to use this tool well?**

- **Who in my organization should be using this tool routinely?**

- **What's the best content for this tool and how do we create it?**