

Best Practices in Social Media: A Guideline

General Guidelines:

Content

- When determining content for social media posts, it is important to keep the 5 P's and an M in mind (purpose, planning, people, publishing, prose, and measurement)
- Implement the rule of thirds – your social media interactions should be 1/3 retweets, links or shared content, 1/3 original content and 1/3 interaction with other accounts or individuals.
- Steer away from heavy content (verbiage) on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram. Information can be informative, but these tools should be used to create nostalgia and spark emotion within your audience – it should not be a place where you post long articles or uninspired/tired photos. Think about the post and the reason behind why you are posting – if there is no inherent value or purpose behind your post, think twice if it deserves a spot on your wall or in your feed.
- Social media is not a megaphone. It should be approached as a two way street. It is as valuable of a tool for interaction as it is for getting your message out there...sometimes more!
- There must be planned content strategy – social media is a constant battle of what your audience likes versus what you want them to like. For optimal results, give them what they want 75% of the time and promote what you want them to like 25% of the time.
- It's important to not be too picky about content, at first. It's invaluable to see what your audience what will respond to, what they like, and what they don't. Keeping track of these trends can help to streamline your posting process.
- Make sure you have integrated social media tactics with your brand strategy. Know your brand well and what you are trying to achieve through the use of social media.
- If you do not have a great web presence (web page) – place a hold on your social media efforts. Your social media efforts should drive traffic to your page. If your page is incomplete, nonexistent, or unappealing, your social media efforts will likely be in vain.

- Try to link back to your organization's web page as much as possible, and use hashtags, where applicable, to promote and maintain your brand. Hashtags can attract new followers, and even enable the possibility for your post to become viral.

Fundraising

- Funds raised through social media campaigns are typically quite small – don't expect to create a successful capital campaign through the use of social media. Most online/social media campaigns raise less than 10k. Return on investment through social media is possible, however – Social media is best used as a tool to FIND money, rather than raise money. Share your findings with your Development Officers in order help them perform their job most effectively.
- Don't discount LinkedIn to find high-profile donors or to reach out to people who are otherwise disconnected from the University. LinkedIn can be an incredibly invaluable donor relations tool.

Metrics

- Metrics are subjective – it isn't always about how many people visit your page or like a post. Sometimes you can post the right message that resonates with the right individual or group of individuals that makes a very meaningful impression with them. Your posts may not resonate with all of your alumni or audience all of the time, and that's OK.
- Social media is a process that is cyclical. Keep in mind that there will be ebbs and flows in traffic, likes, and participation.

Advocacy and Gaining Followers

- Utilize your alumni to outsource excitement – ask them to generate buzz through social media by sharing and liking your posts. Board members are typically great for this.
- Build advocacy through social media – people trust people, not organizations. You will not build advocacy through broadcasting your messages or promoting your personal agenda. Don't neglect internal loyalty – student acquisitions are important, but remember the people who work for your institution. They are valuable!

Privacy, Safety, and Etiquette

- Be polite. Treat people with courtesy and respect. Do not engage in or condone discriminatory, defamatory, or other detrimental conversations.
- When it comes to moderating comments, keep in mind that negative comments are a part of social media. If you delete negative comments, your page will lose its authenticity. Address negative comments in a positive and honest manner. Avoid conflict and never allow yourself to be drawn into an argument online.
- Profanity is discouraged. A good rule of thumb is to see whether you would let a child or grandparent read the page or post.
- Keep communications guidelines and policies in mind. When utilizing social media for your university or school, all pertinent policies from HR and Legal should be taken into account. Abiding by University standards is integral to a seamless social media presence.
- Keep in mind that all content posted on social media is available to the public, including the media.
- Privacy is of the utmost importance. Do not post any identifying or personal information about your students, alumni, faculty, or staff members. Sensitive information, including social security numbers, UID, full date of birth, financial data, etc. should never be published via social media.
- Remove posts that are non-university advertisements or posts that are soliciting your community members. If you happen across information that is relevant to your community, then you may share it, but do not sell or promise promotions via social media.

Working Together

- Approach social media as a team sport. One person cannot and should not do it all.
- It is vital that all individuals who are involved with the social media process know their roles and responsibilities. While there should be shared management, it is essential to determine who is responsible for what. Apply a system that makes sense for your organization.
 - Creating a governance plan may work for some organizations, offices or schools, in this case

References

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