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Agenda

• Overview of social media use
• The benefits of using social media in government
• My personal top 5 tips for how to up your social media game
87% of U.S. adults now use the internet at some level

Of those, 73% use one or more social media sites

Do you use Facebook (personally or professionally)? Twitter?
Among Americans who use the internet:

- Facebook: 71%
- LinkedIn: 28%
- Pinterest: 28%
- Instagram: 26%
- Twitter: 23%
• Facebook is still far and away the most popular social media site today.

• Approximately **1.5 BILLION** users worldwide.

• Demographic breakdown of Facebook users . . .
• The 65+ age group grew more than any other age group over the last three years (21% from 2012 to 2014).

• For the first time, more than half of all online adults 65 and older now use Facebook, at 56%.

• Good communication tool to reach residents of all ages, not just the youngest generations.
Some people might still wonder . . . why should local governments use social media?

• Meaningful engagement with residents & stakeholders where they are
• Encourage participation — create two-directional communication with residents (rather than just pushing information out)
• Increase accessibility, transparency and trust in local government
• Cost . . . social media is a LOW-cost communication tool (notice I didn’t say “NO-cost”)

• But most of all, today it’s EXPECTED!
• Quote from a January 2013 report from Partnership for Public Service that sums it up nicely . . .
“... an entire generation of voters and taxpayers now expects to communicate and conduct transactions through social media. Many citizens do not even remember life without such interaction. This is the new normal.”

• It’s no longer optional for government agencies to use social media for engaging with the public.

• Next I’m going to share with you my top five tips, based on my experience, for upping your agency’s social media game (note: anyone who uses social media for business/government could give you their own version and it could look totally different).

• Focusing on Facebook and Twitter since those are the platforms most local governments in our region use.
1. Increase your social media reach and engagement by adhering to “social media best practices” such as:

- Include an image or video in all Facebook posts and tweets (as often as possible) — see infographic
  - Larger reach
  - Higher engagement

- Keep it short and sweet
  - It’s better not to max out character limits if you can help it
  - Research shows people engage more with shorter posts/tweets than with longer ones
• **Don’t abuse the hashtag** (simply a pound sign in front of a keyword or phrase; the pound sign makes it searchable)

• Excellent blog post called “A Scientific Guide to Hashtags” from Buffer if you want more detailed info, but research shows:
  
  • Limit to one or two per post/tweet

  • If you want to start your own hashtag, for example if you have a big event you want to promote on Twitter:
    • Search to see if anyone’s already using it
    • Run it by a few people to ensure there’s not something you’re missing. For example . . .
• #CowboysUK (Twittersphere interpreted as “Cowboys suck”).

• Might have been avoided if their social media person had consulted with others before using it.

• Just google “hashtag fail” for plenty of embarrassing examples of hashtags gone wrong.
2. Learn about Facebook’s mysterious “Newsfeed Ranking Algorithm” and adjust your content accordingly in order to increase your Facebook reach

• Very complicated — could spend hours just discussing this. I certainly don’t understand it completely.

• The essence of the “News-feed Ranking Algorithm” is that Facebook can’t show you every post from every person and page you follow (too much info), so they try to deliver you the information they think you’ll find most relevant and interesting through their algorithm.

• What this means for local governments is that everyone who “likes” your page is NOT seeing every one of your posts. For example:
  • MARC’s main Facebook page has almost 3,000 likes, however
  • our average post is shown to fewer than 300 of our fans (that’s less than 10%!)  

SO WHAT CAN YOU DO TO MAKE THE ALGORITHM WORK FOR YOU?
How to get into the newsfeed

1. Post regularly
2. Include images
3. Encourage engagement
4. Avoid negativity
5. Focus on quality

Cliff notes version of “how to get into the newsfeed” per social media guru Brian Solis

1. **Post regularly** (especially on weekdays)

2. **Post images** (that are self-explanatory for ease of sharing)

3. **Encourage engagement through**
   - questions, contests, fill in the blank statements, etc.
   - Increases your “affinity score” with fans, which leads to your content showing up more often in their newsfeed in the future
   - Spend time deliberately monitoring and engaging with your partner’s posts

4. **Avoid negative feedback when possible**
   - One “bad” post can harm you more than you realize

5. **Focus on quality content**
   - When *creating* content, make it relevant to your audience (give them the “what’s in it for me”)
   - Content is king
When curating content, share:

- Partner’s posts

- Interesting content related to your agency or program areas (e.g. fun/interesting news stories) — see above example.

- Feel-good story about a dog riding the bus to the dog park by herself; transit is relevant to multiple MARC programs.

- Instead of Facebook pushing this post out to about 300 people, it pushed it to 3,684 BECAUSE THE ALGORITHM COULD TELL PEOPLE LIKED IT!
  - 83 likes
  - 3 comments
  - 20 shares

Bottom line:
Facebook LIKES viral content, so as Facebook’s algorithm sees that a post is getting a lot of interaction/engagement, the system automatically pushes it out to more people.
3. Put thought into when you schedule your content to post on both Facebook and Twitter

- HootSuite is a great tool for scheduling future social media posts!

- General guidelines on frequency:
  - Facebook: Post 5-10 times per week
  - Twitter: Tweet 5+ times per day (not to exceed 20)

- Pay attention to day of week and time of day posts/tweets are scheduled

- There are general guidelines such as these:
  - Facebook = Wed. at 3 p.m.
  - Twitter = Mon-Thurs 9 a.m. & 3 p.m.

- but it’s best to look at your own fans/followers to determine the best day of the week and time of day to post:
Facebook >> Insights >> Posts

When MARC’s Facebook page fans are using Facebook:
- Fairly consistent by day of week, slightly more on Friday
- Largest number of fans at around 8:00 PM
One tool that’s available for free is called “SocialBro” (free up to 5,000 followers)

SocialBro’s “Best Time to Tweet” report . . .

This diagram shows which times our @RecycleSpot twitter account has the most followers active on Twitter:
• Tuesday in the noon hour
• Wednesday in the 9:00 a.m. hour
4. Use HootSuite (or something similar) to monitor Twitter, Facebook and other platforms

- Set up “streams” to monitor mentions, keywords, hashtags
- Easy to set up geocoded searches
- For example, here’s a screenshot of my HootSuite dashboard . . .
- I set up a geocoded keyword search stream that shows me any tweets with the word “transportation” within a 30 mile radius of downtown Kansas City (can adjust the radius)
5. Use promoted (paid) posts/tweets on social media when you really need to reach more people

Paying for promoted posts/tweets is very cost-effective
  • You set the budget ($5 to $500+)
  • Timeframe
  • Target (by zip code, gender, language, etc.)

EXAMPLES:
  • Paid $50 to promote this Head Start post on Facebook & received:
    • Reached 5,645 people (instead of 300 or so)
    • 142 likes
    • 9 comments
    • 19 shares
Questions?
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Suggested articles

The Social Media Frequency Guide: How Often to Post to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and More
https://blog.bufferapp.com/social-media-frequency-guide

#HootTip: Geo-Located Search
http://blog.hootsuite.com/hoottip-geo-located-search/

https://blog.bufferapp.com/a-scientific-guide-to-hashtags-which-ones-work-when-and-how-many

Social Media Update 2014 (Pew Research Center)
http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/01/09/social-media-update-2014/

Online resources
Hootsuite.com
SocialBro.com
BrianSolis.com
Mashable.com
HubSpot.com