



**INSTITUTE for
COMMUNITY
ENGAGED
SCHOLARSHIP**

A Brief Guide to Social Media:

Tips and tricks for using social media for knowledge
mobilization and engagement

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A Guide to Social Media

What is social media?

“**Social media** refers to interaction among people in which they create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks”

([Wikipedia](#), December 3, 2013)

Social media is changing how people interact with each other and with technology. Currently, outreach and engagement strategies are becoming more and more heavily based on social media and creating online communities. This involves new skills and terminology, but also a new potential for reaching audiences and shaping conversations and practice.

This guide provides an overview of tips and tricks for setting up a social media strategy in academic and non-profit contexts. The guide is aimed at novice and intermediate-level users.

Terminology and Best Practices: Twitter & Facebook

We focus here on terminology and best practices associated with two key social media channels: Twitter and Facebook. While your organization may also manage other account types (e.g., YouTube), it's likely that these two channels are the core of your social media strategy. This section should provide you with a general idea of how to use different social media channels and some jargon associated with each of them. While going through this section, you may want to keep a few questions in mind: how will a specific channel help you implement your social media strategy? Will one channel more effectively communicate your key messages better than another?

Getting started

- After creating your account, spend some time watching and following others engaged in similar work – how are they posting and using social media?

Gaining followers

- On Twitter, follow others in similar organizations or with similar interests.
- On Facebook organizational (group) pages, you can't follow others, but instead have to promote the page elsewhere & wait for people and organizations to "like" your page.
- Remember to add links to your social media from your website (and vice versa).

- Share social media links through staff email footers and business cards.

Re-posting & sharing

- Do: share news items, photos and updates that are interesting to your community and audience and relevant to your organization
- Don't: share posts (or tweets, etc.) which reflect poorly on the organization, or staff.
- Don't: share posts which are political or controversial in nature

Community Management 101

- Do not engage in or indulge “trolling.” “Trolls” are people who use controversial or obscene messages to provoke a response (i.e., baiting a hook & trolling for controversy).
 - Some users are “CAVE” people – Citizens Against Virtually Everything; don't bait them and don't engage with them.
- When responding to negative comments or feedback, address the issue *once* publicly, then direct the conversation offline. This shows our community that we value their feedback, yet avoids long drawn-out discussions in public forums.
- Treat questions or comments like ringing phones: answer as quickly as possible, within one business day at the latest.
- Aim for the “rule of thirds”: one third re-tweets/reposts, one third mentions/interactions, and one third links/original content.
- Whenever possible, redirect content and conversation back to the relevant projects/websites



Twitter - <https://twitter.com/>

Overview

Twitter is a popular micro-blogging platform that allows users to send brief (140 characters or fewer) messages to a community of followers. Twitter allows you to aggregate content (Tweets) from users you have chosen to follow.

Terminology

Tweets:

Short (<140 character) messages shared via Twitter. Tweets may contain embedded images, hyperlinks, @mentions or #hashtags.

Followers:

Users who have chosen to subscribe to your tweets.

@mention:

A link to another user's Twitter profile, which is used to "tag" a person or a brand in a tweet.

Re-tweet:

The action of sharing another user's tweet with your followers – sometimes known as "RT". (An "MT" is a "modified tweet" that is to show attribution, like when using the term via.

#Hashtag:

Used to "tag" a topic for categorization so that tweets bearing the same tags can be recalled in a list. Hashtags are useful for linking tweets in similar topics or for capturing conversations at an event (e.g. a conference). Hashtags are sometimes used ironically, to make jokes.

Favourite:

Users can "favourite" tweets to indicate agreement or to bookmark a tweet for later.

DM:

A direct message sent between two Twitter users. You can only send a DM to someone who is following you.

Trend:

A popular keyword or hashtag that is "trending" in a geographic area. Common trends are news stories and Internet memes.

Twitter Chats:

Twitter chats are a venue for people to discuss a topic of shared interest, by coming together at a specific time and using a specific #hashtag.

Community Management Tips

- Twitter, like other social media, works best as an engagement platform, not as a broadcast medium. Take care to re-tweet messages from other users (when appropriate) and to respond to questions, queries or tweets. Treat questions with the same urgency as a text message.
- Follow back users you are interested in hearing from. As a rule, try to only follow active Twitter users.
- It is advisable to use lists. When following (or noting a new follower), you can add users to lists to organize followers. Tools like TwitListManager or SproutSocial make this task simpler.
- Whenever possible, use hyperlinks to direct users back your website, or to content that you “own”. Shorten links to save space in your tweet using a service like bit.ly. Social media tools like HootSuite can also create and track shortened links.
- For regularly used links, use a service like bit.ly to track clicks over a longer period of time.

Content That Works

- Short updates on news and events
- Photos of the landmark buildings of your institution, organization, and/or people.
- “Fill in the blank” and “this or that” questions
- Quotes and inspirational messages
- Live tweets from events and meetings
- Reflections or responses to other’s content.



Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/>

Overview

Facebook allows you to share information about your business, organization, or community groups through “[pages](#)”. An important aspect to using Facebook successfully is to like, comment, and/or share posts that are relative and reflect our brand.

Terminology

Posts:

A Facebook post is similar to a public blog entry. A post can have embedded images, hyperlinks, comment, etc. These posts will be seen by your fans and friends, and if liked/commented/shared by any of these fans or friends, will be then visible (depending on their settings) to their friends.

Fans:

Users who have chosen to “like” your page.

Comment:

A comment on a specific post (shown directly below it) is exactly that- a comment, articulated thought or expression on a specific post.

Share:

The action of sharing another user’s post with your fans/friends.

Like:

Users can “like” organizational (group) pages to receive regular feeds from us on their timeline and can like (indicating their agreement or affinity) on a particular post or share.

Message:

A direct, private message sent between you and (a) Facebook user(s).

Community Management Tips

- Try to use Facebook as an engagement platform, not just as a broadcast medium. Interacting with your fans and friends can be a more sufficient way to communicate, such as: responding to comments or sharing posts from other users.
- Whenever possible, use hyperlinks to direct users back to the institution or any relevant, important or upcoming projects the institution may be working on

Content That Works

- Short updates on news and events
- Photos of the buildings and scenes
- “Fill in the blank” and “this or that” questions
- Quotes and inspirational messages
- Career tips and job postings

Elements of a Social Media Strategy

Why are you using social media? How will you know if you're successful? Managing a social media account takes time and energy. Consider your goals and how you will translate those goals into content & key messages. Consider your audience, your organizational brand, and the resources you have available to support social media efforts. Finally, plan to track metrics and evaluate the success of your social media efforts and think about sharing those results with others.

Goals and objectives

- What actions do you want our followers to take?
- Why are you participating in social media?
- What is the value?
- How are your goals tied to actions?
- These types of questions help to measure your effectiveness with social media use.

Key messages

- What are you saying?
- What do you want to be influential in?
- What are your key topics and target communities?
- Your key messages in Social Media should tie into your larger communications platform.

Content aggregation & planning

- What are you posting? (photos, videos, questions, news items, etc.)
- What types of content work best & where?
- Where can you find content? (Primary sources, re-tweets, partners, Google Alerts)
- How will you plan content?
- This will likely tie into your communications platform.

Channels

- Where should you invest your efforts?
- Think about your audience – who do you want to reach?
- Where should you participate?
- Where should you “observe”? (e.g., Google Alerts or forums like Reddit may be a better place to observe whereas Twitter at times demands participation)

Brand identity

- What avatars and logos should we be using?
- What is our brand voice and tone?
- Will there be a look/feel to photos, visual content? (Think colours, fonts, styles, white space, etc. in what is identifying you and your organization to the public)

People

- Who should be posting? Will you use an editorial calendar?
- How much time should social media take?
- Who should have control and accountability?
- Password management and who has access?
- Who needs to be aware of our social media strategy?
- Where are our allies – campus, peers?
- How will you delegate and communicate?

Measurement

- What should we be measuring? How often? Who should be measuring?
- What metrics are useful in determining the success of a strategy? (Should tie into your goals)
- What tools will be most helpful?

Reporting

- What metrics and stories should be reported? To who? How often?

Measuring Success of Social Media

In order to determine the success your social media efforts, you need to decide how you want to measure engagement and impact. The data you collect helps you to make the best decisions about what types of content to post, on which channel and at what time of day/week. However, you don't necessarily want to measure everything possible – the amount of data you can collect from social media can be overwhelming. Try to find a few measures that capture what you're trying to achieve (e.g., reach of message, interactions, etc....).

Measurement Framework Suggestions

1. **Vanity Metrics** – the number of members in a community. This can be measured as “fans” or “likes” or from group members or “followers”. Tools and Strategies: these metrics are built into social media platforms directly.
2. **Follower Changes** – the number of community members gained or lost week over week. A high gain or loss may be an indicator of excellent or poor content choice. Tools and Strategy: on platform and spreadsheet formula.
3. **Reach/Impressions** – number of people who (potentially) viewed a social media messages. Tools and Strategies: Facebook Insights and Crowdbooster.
4. **Interactions** – sum of engagement points on a social media channel. For Twitter, this includes RTs, @s and favourites. For Facebook, this includes likes, comments, shares, and posts. For LinkedIn, this includes likes, comments and posts. Tools and Strategies: on platform (using Facebook Insights, LinkedIn group view) and Crowdbooster.
5. **Engagement** – number of interactions in one week divided by the number of members in a community. This number gives a rough count of the percentage of active community members. Tools and Strategies: on platform and spreadsheet.
6. **Click-throughs** - The number of times a URL redirect (bit.ly or ow.ly) has been clicked. Helps us determine what types of content are the most popular and engaging. Tools and Strategies: Hootsuite ow.ly report + bit.ly.
7. **Traffic** - Number of visits and unique visitors to a website or blog. Google Analytics helps to track how long users spend on the website and what pages they visit. Tools and Strategies: Google Analytics, assistance may be required from IT or Communications Manager for use of this measurement tool.
8. **Social Influence** - The amount of “influence” a user or brand has on social media. An influence score is calculated by analyzing an account's network and interactions. Tools and Strategies: Klout, a website that uses social media analytics to rank its users according to online social influence.
9. **Qualitative** - Other useful metrics to track include: most active community member, most influential community member, activity levels on promoted posts/threads, themes and trends. Tools and Strategies: Varies.

Appendices

Resources

This section includes a suggested style guide for things to consider when writing for different social media channels. There are also some suggestions for consistency with your organization's identity to the social media sphere – such as branding and style.

This section also includes other resources as templates for various social media communication plans that may be relevant to your organization.

Lastly included are suggested online resources to help with better understanding and utilizing social media.

Style Guide Suggestions

Caps & Spelling

Social Media Channels

- Social media channels should always be capitalized:
Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube, Google+
- Verbs/actions associated with social media should not be capitalized:
post, like, pin, tweet, follow, favourite, retweet, reblog, repin, comment, share

Dates & Times

- If you're referring to a specific date, the month must be shortened to the following:
Jan. Feb. Mar. Apr. May June July Aug. Sept. Oct. Nov. Dec.
- If you're referring to just a month, spell it out
- No suffix on date (Mar. 20, not Mar. 20th)
- Days in full (Wednesday, Thursday)
- Date format: Wednesday, Jan. 4 2010
- 9 p.m. or 10:37 a.m.

Numbers

- One to eleven – written out
- 12+ - numerical
- 1000 – no comma
- 10,000 or 100,000 etc. – commas used
- Do not use suffixes (seventh instead of 7th)

Names & Titles

Organizations and Units

- First mention: **full name**
→ Second mention: acronym if necessary

Executives and Titles

- President **full name**
→ Formal: full name and title
→ Second Mention: just name or title

Punctuation

- Never post messages IN ALL CAPS. It looks like you're yelling at people
- Avoid exclamation marks. A good rule: one exclamation mark per week.
- Use single question marks.
- Avoid the use of emoticons or "smileys."

Branding

Colours & Fonts

- Identify brand colours of your organization and use those

Logo – Social Media Avatars

- Generally, the organization's logo should be used in all custom, visual branded content.
- Follow the graphic standards and logo guidelines of your organization.

Voice & Tone

- Informative, helpful and fun. Choose simple, direct language.
- When posting, remember that you are representing your organization. Do not post anything that you would be uncomfortable displaying on a billboard in front of your coworkers.

Sizing Best Practices: Avatars, Photos, Headers

Twitter

- Profile Photo: 81 x 81 pixels
- Header Photo: 520 x 260 pixels
- Background: (varies) 1600 x 1200 pixels

Facebook

- Profile Photo: 160 x 160 pixels (upload as 180 x 180)

- Cover Photo: 851 x 315 pixels
- Latest Photo + App Photos: 111 x 74 pixels

Online resources

Social Media

- Ragan's Daily Headlines (e-newsletter) | www.ragan.com
- Mashable | www.mashable.com
- Eluta Social Media "ProBook" | <http://blog.eloqua.com/social-media-probook/>
- Read Write Web | www.readwriteweb.com
- TechCrunch | www.techcrunch.com

Social Media Image Sizing Cheat Sheet

<http://econsultancy.com/ca/blog/11221-the-ultimate-social-media-image-sizing-cheat-sheet>

Samples

Below is a sample template of an editorial calendar for training purposes, which can be used to keep track of which social media channels are being used for important events/dates.

Sample Social Media Editorial Calendar

<i>Day</i>	<i>Messaging</i>	<i>Link/Tag</i>	<i>Facebook</i>	<i>Twitter</i>	<i>LinkedIn</i>	<i>Tumblr</i>	<i>Pinterest</i>	<i>YouTube</i>	<i>Staffing Notes</i>	<i>Web Link</i>
Wed. Oct 24	United Nations Day		x	x						
	Halloween Haunt		x	x		x				
	Staff Party		x	x	x		x			
Sat. Oct 27	Office Potluck			x						
	Tribute Event			x						
Wed. Oct 31	Halloween		x	x		x			(Half-Day)	
Fri. Nov2	Fair November coming soon		x	x	x	x	x			