

Social Media

RESOURCE GUIDE

AUMA/AAMDC

January 2015



**ALL YOU
NEED IS
LIKE** 

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association and the Alberta Association of Municipal District and Counties Social Media Resource Guide.

Citizen engagement provides a means for incorporating citizen values, interests, needs and desires into decisions that affect their lives and supports improved municipal decision-making by bringing all perspectives to the table. The Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) and Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties (AAMDC) are committed to supporting their members as they pursue strong and effective local governance through citizen engagement. As part of this commitment, AUMA and AAMDC are partners, through the support of grant funding, in developing this resource guide. Collaborative initiatives, including the 2007 Citizen Engagement Toolkit and now this guide, are one way both associations seek to serve member interests.

The proliferation of social media has challenged traditional means of citizen engagement and this guide is designed to provide you, whether an elected official or member of municipal administration, some relevant and practical advice and tools to support effective digital engagement using social media.

The first thing that you need to know is that social media should not be used as a standalone solution to engagement, nor should it replace your traditional means of connecting and engaging with your citizens and stakeholders. Social media presents immense opportunity – opportunity to be harnessed as part of your overarching engagement and communication planning and activities.

The second thing is that, while there are risks associated with using social media, it can be extremely beneficial with some thoughtful and careful planning. This guide is designed to provide some helpful best practices to give you good food for thought as you consider how best to engage and communicate with your citizens and stakeholders; it also provides the relevant templates to build your capacity to use social media and move you to action. No two elected officials, municipalities, municipal districts or municipal counties needs are the same, making it important to invest in your own plan – one that is designed for your unique context.

This guide is laid out in three sections, each designed with a specific purpose.

Section 1 focuses on the benefits, opportunities and potential pitfalls associated with using social media as part of municipal engagement.

It begins with a brief history of social media, explaining why it is important for municipal agents to use social media to complement traditional means of engagement and communication. It goes further to outline some of the top reasons that social media astounds and confounds municipal users, as well as explains some of the ways you can expect to see and use social media in your engagement activities.

Section 2 focuses on good planning to prepare you for success with all of your social media activities.

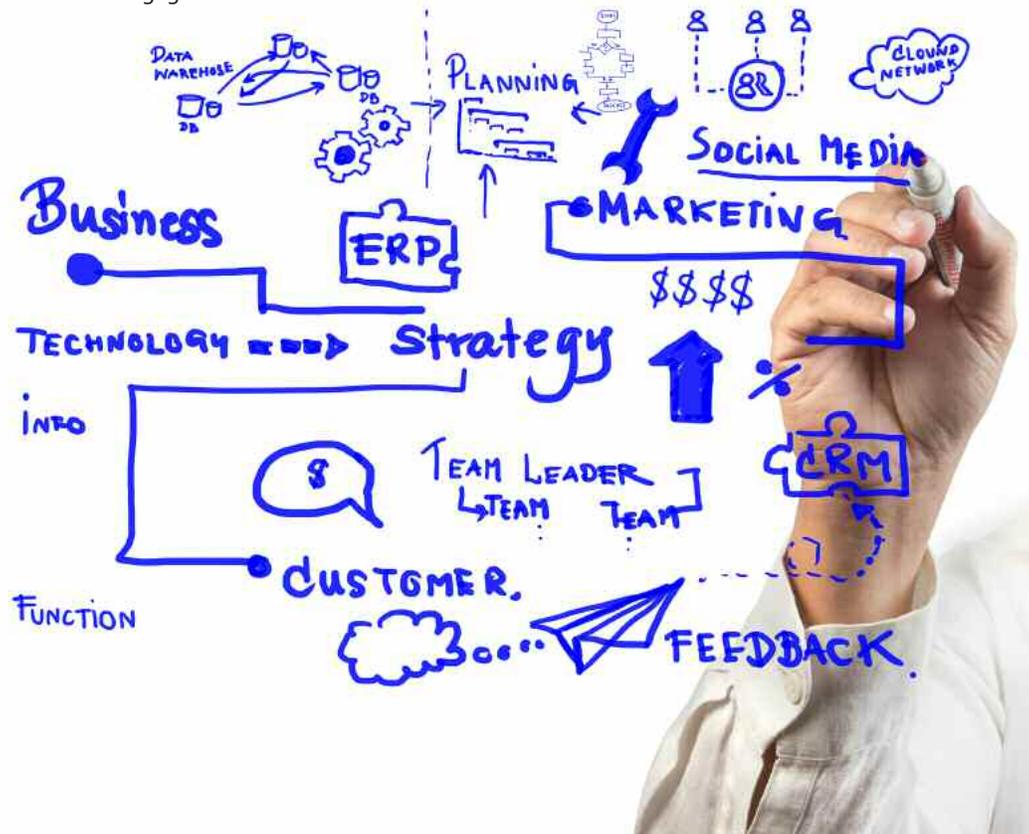
It provides a step-by-step look at the eight components that make up a meaningful social media strategy. It goes further to emphasize the importance of evaluating the impact of social media on achieving your desired outcomes, as well as to describe how to develop social media policies to guide decisions and achieve rational and beneficial outcomes.

Section 3 emphasizes you and your municipality's social media readiness.

This section presents three inter-related pillars that affect your social media readiness. It presents key questions, relative to the three pillars, that you should ask yourself before choosing to engage through social media. It also offers a one-page readiness assessment worksheet and a comprehensive set of questions to support a thorough SWOT analysis of your readiness.

As you make your way through the guide you are encouraged to reference the Alberta Municipal Affairs Public Input Toolkit and the AUMA/AAMDC Citizen Engagement Toolkit for additional context.

- Alberta Municipal Affairs Toolkit
- AUMA Citizen Engagement Toolkit
- AAMDC Citizen Engagement Toolkit



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Get Social!

1

Social Media and Municipal Engagement

Gone are the days when government could control its message. Social media offers the potential to break down many of the barriers that once prevented the public from being consulted on issues and decisions that affect them. However, municipalities need to be prepared to embrace it.

This starts with understanding how media has changed and, ultimately, evolved from audience to participant-based communication. It also requires municipalities to understand the benefits, challenges and possibilities associated with using social media to support and conduct municipal engagement.

SECTION 1

Social Media and Municipal Engagement

1.1

A brief history of social media

Media offers the opportunity to amplify your voice. It can extend your reach, put you in touch with larger and more diverse audiences, and give you a greater level of exposure. Our media began as *broadcast media* – a means for one person, group, company or organization to share its message with the masses.

Broadcast media was the norm for almost 100 years, including radio broadcasts (1906), television broadcasts (1952), and commercial internet (mid-1980s). It taught us many things, including that we can be in control of our messaging, have long lead times to decide on the best message to share, and target large collections of people with the same message. We operated on the belief that people are audiences and they exist, primarily, to consume content. We set up our municipal organizations to communicate and engage under these pretenses.

Internet-based communication has evolved incredibly quickly. It started as a small network of academics exchanging information (1960s). Its potential to expedite information was realized, and it became a commercial means to **exchange** information (1980s). By the early 1990s, the internet was functioning as a way for people to **exchange** information through email and discussion forums and **broadcast** information through websites. The game changer was **transparency**.

With the creation of discussion forums (1994) and blogs (1997), conversation became possible *and* visible on the internet. Instead of engaging in 1:1 conversations (email) or 1:many conversations (broadcast media), the

internet allowed people to, in the presence of many, engage with one another in conversation. In essence, people were able to socialize in the online environment. As part of this, online profiles became instrumental to creating an identity to aid interactions and more and more tools were created to help people to connect and share information around common interests (*Six Degrees, 1997; Friendster, 2002; MySpace 2003; Hi5, 2003; Facebook, 2004; Twitter, 2006*).

The term *social media* followed the advent of Web 2.0 (1999), which referred to people interacting and collaborating with each other through social dialogue by creating user-generated content in virtual communities. This was a direct contrast to Web 1.0, where people were limited to passive viewing of content. Web 2.0 was deemed to include social networking sites, blogs, wikis, folksonomies, video sharing sites, web applications and mashups. Social media were the tools, whether websites or applications, that allowed people to create and share content within a social network.

1.2

A place for social media in municipal engagement

Municipalities are, by their very nature, social. They are made up of people, and municipal governments, both officials and administration, are people serving people. They are also, as part of Alberta's *Municipal Government Act*, charged with citizen engagement requirements that specify how citizens can work with their municipalities. While many of these requirements focus on face-to-face interactions (e.g. - public hearings, council and committee meetings) and broadcasting information (e.g. - advertising, public notices), social media presents valuable opportunities for more public input – often earlier in the process.

CHARACTERISTICS OF BROADCAST MEDIA

One-way communication

Broadcast corporate messages and information

Targets collections of individuals with some specialization based on demographics and viewer or listening statistics

Audience simply consumes content

FIVE KEY TRAITS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

1. PARTICIPATION

Social media is curated and created. Someone creates the space for interaction and then other users are invited to contribute and provide feedback. Social media platforms rely on the community to create social norms.

2. OPENNESS

Communities are typically wide open for participation; passwords and other barriers are frowned upon.

3. CONNECTEDNESS

Social media creates networks, brings people together and provides means to share all varieties of information. It links people, ideas and digital media.

4. CONVERSATION

Social media is two-way communication, also called conversation.

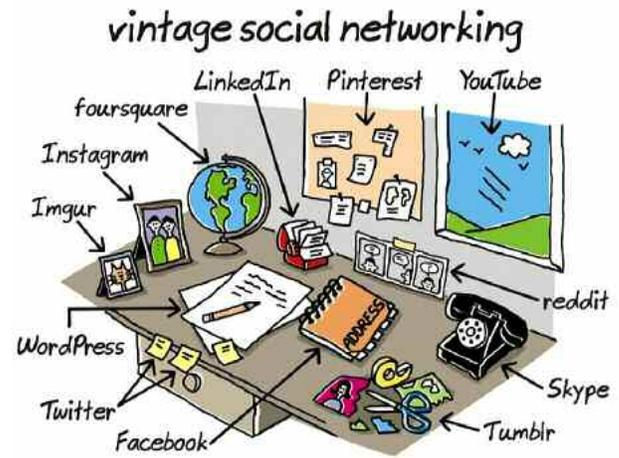
5. COMMUNITY

Community is the golden ticket of social media. Done well, social media can quickly and effectively rally communities of people around a shared topic.

SOURCE: Adapted from Mayfield, A. (2008).

Outside of their legal obligations, municipalities, and particularly elected officials as municipal representatives, are in place to meet citizens' needs. While social media may be fairly new and unfamiliar territory for many municipal organizations, some members of your public, and particularly your younger citizens, have been interacting using social media for over a decade. They understand that social media is a way to amplify their voices and make direct connections to decision-makers in their communities. They have greater expectations of the people who serve them. They expect more say into decisions that affect them. They expect better access to information and services. They expect to have more influence into how, where and when they receive information. Gone are the days when citizens are comfortable being an audience to municipal messaging; here are the days when citizens want to speak directly to people who make decisions, and are already in conversations with other people who care about the same issues as them.

While changing citizen expectations may seem daunting at first, they are very well-aligned with the business and engagement requirements of municipal elected officials and administrations. A challenging aspect of municipal business has always been finding ways to disseminate important information efficiently and timely, increase public engagement, and find ways to connect with hard-to-reach citizens and stakeholders. Social media provides a low-cost, timely and highly accessible solution for these challenges.



<http://wronghands1.wordpress.com> © John Atkinson, Wrong Hands

Social media can complement municipal engagement efforts by:

- Providing more legitimate and easily accessible ways to participate in conversations with citizens and stakeholders;
- Diversifying public input by including the voices of hard-to-reach citizens and stakeholders;
- Allowing access to existing community interests and networks;
- Providing cost-effective means to share information about offline engagement opportunities;
- Driving traffic to hosted spaces, including websites with important information or discussion forums; and
- Offering creative ways to make data and information more useful and understandable to citizens and stakeholders.

1.3

The benefits of social media for municipalities

As a municipality, a good portion of your business is connecting with people. In some instances, you're providing information and sharing ideas. In other instances, you're collecting information and ideas. Sometimes you're doing both, as part of a conversation, to collaborate with your citizens or stakeholders. Social media is a way to make this possible.

Most people think of specific tools when they think of social media. They focus on the features of the tool (e.g. – video, links,

pictures). They get caught up in the conversations and activities that are trending on these sites. They get fixated on the potential for content to go viral and influence thousands, if not millions, of users. They get focused on clever hashtags and the popularity (e.g. - Facebook likes, Twitter retweets) of their content.

The truth is that social media tools are just tools, and tools exist to help us do our work. The true benefits of social media, as tools, will be realized when they are helping you to achieve your municipal goals.



GO VIRAL means that content becomes very popular by circulating quickly from person to person.



SOCIAL MEDIA RESOURCE GUIDE VIGNETTE STRATHCONA COUNTY

Social media users are pet crazy. Log into any one of your social media accounts, scroll down, and see how long it takes you to find a posting showcasing an adorable critter. It won't be long. Internet sensations like Grumpy Cat, Sockington (house cat) and Boo (Pomeranian dog) have millions of followers - more than many A-list celebrities. To top it off, it is estimated that 1 in 10 pets has its own social media profile.

Strathcona County is one municipality that is putting purpose to our near-obsession with cute animals. The County receives a number of complaints each year about dogs roaming off-leash and deposits of doggie-doo. These are hard messages to sell, and the County was seeking a positive and high profile means to get pet owners' attention.

They decided to speak directly to pet owners' hearts. In the spring of 2014, they ran a photo contest for dog owners. They encouraged pet owners to submit photos of their prized pooches on Facebook. Pet owners jumped at the opportunity and residents, true to the trend, responded by viewing the photos more than 20,000 times.

The impact - Strathcona County framed every dog photo with a caption encouraging good pet practices, including "Everytime I poop, you scoop" and "Keep me safe - on a leash". They were able to connect directly with dog owners and share an important message as part of a positive and joyful interaction.

Strathcona County Recreation, Parks and Culture added 247 new photos to the album **Dog Photos**.
Check out the adorable dogs of Strathcona County!

Here are the contest details...

90,835 People Reached		
3,045,872 Likes, Comments & Shares		
FROM YOUR PAGE AND POSTS		
39 Likes	26 Comments	72 Shares
FROM LIKES, COMMENTS & SHARES		
2,721,052 Likes	323,011 Comments	1,872 Shares
TOTAL		
2,721,091 Likes	323,037 Comments	1,744 Shares
20,389 Post Clicks		
20,246 Photo Views	143 Like Clicks	0 Other Clicks
NEGATIVE FEEDBACK		
136 Hide Post	0 Hide All Posts	
1 Report as Spam	0 Unlike Page	

Like Comment Share 29 Likes 26 Comments 72 Shares

As an **elected official**, social media can help you:

- Connect directly and personally with residents and stakeholders;
- Use plain language to introduce complex ideas and issues;
- Gain broad access to people with diverse ideas, input and experiences;
- Foster transparency;
- Allow you to engage in important conversations that are taking place in your area;
- Keep the pulse of your community by listening to people's concerns and following trending conversations;
- Build a personal brand through your online profile and the content that you create and share;
- Clarify misinformation and share information;
- Request feedback on your ideas or decisions made by your Council and Committees;
- Invest in and build stronger relationships;
- Align yourself with and leverage connections with people, organizations and stakeholders to move forward the priorities of your community;
- Probe and further explore input and ideas generated by citizens and stakeholders;
- Invite your citizens and stakeholders to engage further (e.g. - visit website, attend a public meeting); and
- Build credibility by sharing timely and accurate information in a respectful and professional manner.

As **municipal administration**, social media can help you:

- Introduce and provide information about programs and services to your citizens and stakeholders;
- Invest in community building by collecting and sharing stories, images and other local content;
- Market your community to networks within and outside of your area;
- Build a community brand through your online profile and the content that you create and share;
- Drive citizens and stakeholders to your organization's website, special events or public engagement opportunities;
- Manage emergencies by providing an immediate, low-cost, and direct way to share information with people;
- Invite feedback on ideas for programs, services, policies or bylaws to make improvements in the community;
- Share information on pending or important decisions;
- Humanize your municipal organization and its impact in the community; and
- Build a positive reputation by sharing information in a respectful and professional way.



1.4

Overcoming the risks and concerns social media presents for municipalities

Social media has changed the way that we connect through media by increasing the transparency of our interactions and making it possible for many people to connect with many other people (known as many:many interactions) in a common virtual space. While increased transparency and many:many connections in near real-time can greatly enhance public involvement and the public's ability to provide input to municipal representatives, they also limit some of the traditional and predominantly accepted processes and protocols of municipalities communicating with and engaging their citizens and stakeholders.

Some things that deter effective online communication and engagement are:

- Long lead times to create content and respond to inquiries;
- The public as audiences (as opposed to participants); and
- 1:1 conversations and interactions between municipal representatives and citizens or stakeholders.

Social media also comes with a number of perceived concerns. Some of these concerns are being shown to be myths and fallacies surrounding social media while the others can be managed with good planning.

Our citizens and stakeholders aren't online or looking for municipal information through social media

Spend a little bit of time learning to navigate social media exchanges, and you'll quickly discover that people are having conversations that matter to you even if they're having them without you. The purpose of social media isn't to create a home base that attracts people to you; that's your website. It's for you to be *part of* creating and sharing content that matters to your municipal organization and the people who rely on it. The online conversations about potholes, snow accumulation, local infrastructure, or access to recreation programs in your area – they all could have, depending on your goals and levels of service, been your cue.

I can't measure the impact of social media

Yes, you can. If you are intentional about creating clear goals that drive your use of social media then you'll be able to create performance measures that align with each of these goals. There are extensive social media metrics and analysis tools available, many at low to no-charge, that can help you understand the impact that you are making through social media.

Social media requires extensive resourcing

While it's true that social media does require resourcing, it offers substantial potential as a value-add. When you consider the cost of investing in many traditional broadcast mediums, such as print, television, and radio, social media has the potential to offer significant reach for a fraction of the cost per citizen or stakeholder.



AS OF APRIL 2013,
97 per cent of the 831 Albertans
polled by Insights West were
familiar with Facebook and
75 per cent were using it.

REACH

A data metric that determines the potential size of audience any given message can reach.

People participate in social media 24/7

One of the truths about social media is that it makes conversations visible. While people and municipalities may fear what others have to say, the truth is that these conversations are often happening anyway. Social media helps make these conversations visible. While it is important to listen and engage regularly, social media mimics the social interactions in life. We aren't tuned in 100 per cent of the time and we tend to matters as they present themselves. In the event of emergency situations, your regular processes and protocols are in place to help you.



Retrieved from <https://algonquincollegesocialmedia.files.wordpress.com/2014/04/internet-troll-101.jpeg>

Not everyone uses social media for good

This is true. There are trolls out there. Remember that you're participating as part of a community. Your community has the ability to make its own judgments and also the freewill to step in and help manage troll activities. You also have the opportunity to invoke social media policies and guidelines that direct your response to these situations.

One of us may misrepresent or say something negative about our municipality

Municipalities have policies in place for all sorts of activities. They also have disciplinary policies in place to manage day-to-day scenarios. Social media does not take place outside of your regular business; it's part of your business. The same policies and procedures that have merit in face-to-face interactions have merit relative to social interactions as well.

We don't have the time or money to produce flashy content

Remember, engaging through social media is about knowing your citizens and stakeholder and their needs. If you take the time to understand what your public expects from your municipality then you'll quickly understand that not everyone's aim is to produce a Youtube video that gains millions of views. You'll have your own business needs, and they likely rest a lot closer to home.

My colleagues will abuse social media access

As a municipality, you provide a significant number of tools that allow people to do their work. You trust them to be responsible in using these tools and accountable for what they produce. Social media is no different. You can set policies and processes to guide efficient and effective use of social media, and you can work with IT to monitor people's online activity. This can be a reassurance. However, ultimately, social media is a tool and it requires trusting employees in the same way that they are trusted in other aspects of their work.

Privacy legislation, including Alberta's Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection Act, places too many restrictions on effective social media use

Adhering to privacy legislation is important; it is in place to protect the very people that you are serving – your residents and stakeholders. At the same time, working within privacy legislation is simply a matter of clearly stating your municipality's security and data retention policies. You'll want to be clear about how you protect confidential information and how you differentiate between soliciting input (a record to be maintained) and responding to public inquiries (no record required). When in doubt, consult your privacy specialist or confer with the Government of Alberta's *Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection Act*.

We won't get the quality input that we require for our engagement obligations

One of the most significant advantages of social media and online engagement is that it brings people together and gets them thinking and collaborating to create content. This doesn't mean that everything contributed is Grade A input nor does it mean that everyone will agree on content. However, it does mean that you'll have access to a diverse population who will, as wikis have shown, work together to create valuable, meaningful and, thanks to all the interfacing and conversation possible, accurate content (e.g. - Wikipedia).

People won't participate

While it's true that the vast majority (more than 90 per cent) of social media users read messages without responding, there is still value in using social media to engage your residents. First, sharing information and building awareness is an

important part of generating enough interest for people to feel compelled to invest in a relationship or engage around a topic. Second, you are participating as a member of a larger community. There will be times that you will start a conversation and times that you participate in conversations already in progress. When you choose to start a conversation and engage your citizens and stakeholders, be sure that you've done your homework to understand their needs and what they care about.

1.5

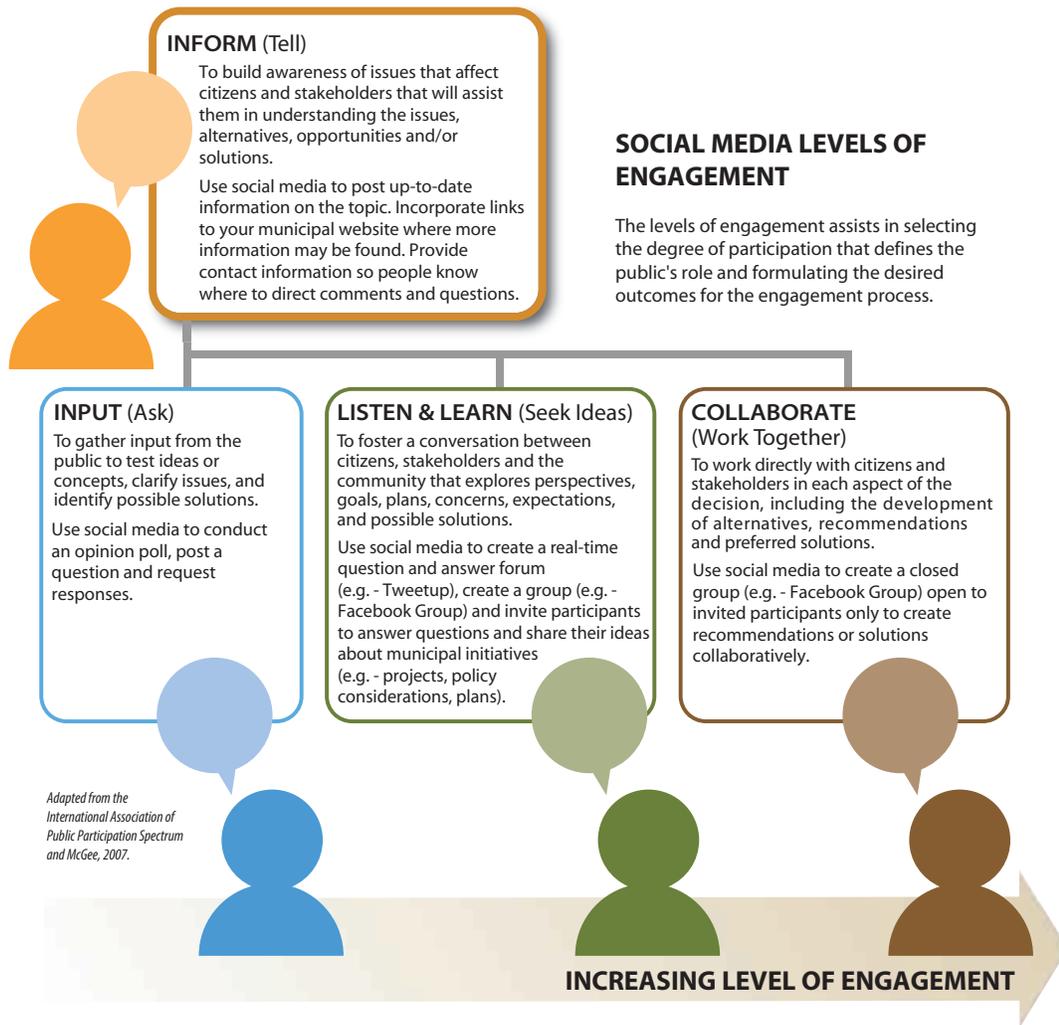
Seeing and using social media in municipal communication and engagement

Social media should be part of municipal engagement; it should not stand on its own. Social media doesn't replace your other forms of communication and engagement; it supplements them, and should be part of an overarching communications and engagement strategy for your municipality.

By familiarizing yourself with the engagement practices aided by social media, it becomes possible to develop engagement outcomes, and a supporting plan, around these practices.

The following diagram illustrates that there are different levels of communication and engagement depending on your goals – Input, Listen & Learn, and Collaborate. Underpinning each of the three levels is the goal to Inform, which emphasizes using social media to build awareness and understanding of issues and engagement opportunities. As you move through the three levels, the potential impact on your citizens and stakeholders (your participants) increases.





SOCIAL MEDIA RESOURCE GUIDE VIGNETTE GRANDE PRAIRIE

Mayor Bill Given was surprised to receive a text message well into a Sunday evening, December 1, 2014, from a resident worried about a large-scale evacuation in his northeast Grande Prairie neighbourhood. As it turned out, the resident, and several more members of the public, were baited by a Facebook post announcing a false evacuation notice.

“One of the challenges with social media is that it amplifies people’s voices,” says Mayor Given, “In this case, a misrepresentation of facts caused a fair amount of panic for people.”

As it turned out, ATCO and the City of Grande Prairie’s fire department were asked to investigate reports of a noxious odour in one northeast neighbourhood early Sunday afternoon. No source was found and no concern was identified; the Facebook post – made after the investigation – indicated the city was on ‘high alert’ with an evacuation in progress.

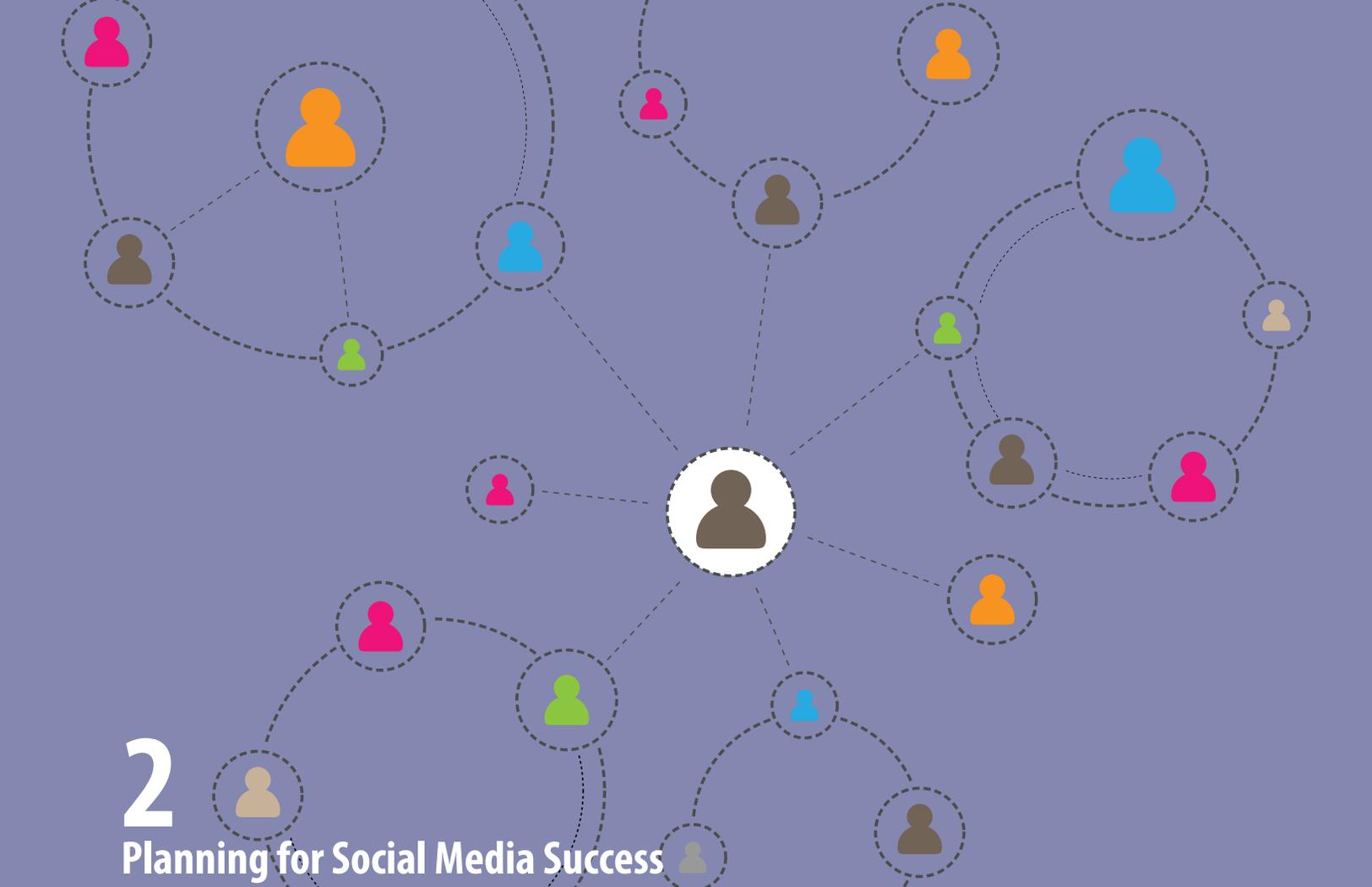
“The good news is that we were made aware of the concern and, despite it being late on a Sunday evening, we were able to bring together the right people to respond in a timely way,” explains the Mayor. “We were able to issue a formal statement to our local media outlets that same night, and we issued a statement on our official City of Grande Prairie Facebook page on Monday morning.”

While it took a few days to quash the rumour and respond to a number of resident concerns about emergency communication, it gave the City of Grande Prairie a good opportunity to reflect on its processes and approach to emergency communications.

“This turned out to be a great learning opportunity, and thankfully one without serious impact to anyone in our community,” shares the Mayor. “It gave us pause to think about how to respond to misinformation, how to better manage incidents outside of business hours, and how to proactively engage with our residents.”

Some of Mayor Given’s tips include:

- Work with service providers and encourage them to communicate openly and often about any visible work in your neighbourhoods;
- Ensure residents know how and where to access credible information about local events or emergencies;
- Be clear about your after-hours emergency response and communications processes;
- Make use of all your social media tools during emergencies (e.g.- people who follow information about their favourite facilities or neighbourhoods may not be connected with the official community page);
- Remember that social media and traditional media work hand in hand;
- Educate your elected officials on emergency protocols and how to access factual information during emergency scenarios; and
- Encourage your residents to share and re-tweet information directly from credible sources.



2 Planning for Social Media Success

Regardless of your knowledge and experience with social media, it is vital to invest in a plan and ensure it aligns with your overarching communications and engagement plan.

The purpose of a plan is to ensure that your social media activities are taking you closer to your desired outcomes. Too often, social media is an afterthought or a standalone activity. In other instances, social media is given too much emphasis, such as when municipalities attempt to replicate or reproduce face-to-face interactions using a social media platform. Ultimately, every municipality has unique business priorities and every social media tool has unique capabilities, users and functions. The purpose of a plan is to bring everything that affects your engagement results into alignment. This includes setting clear outcomes, knowing what separates you from your outcomes, knowing who you want to engage with, understanding the type of content that will make the biggest impact, choosing the tool that best supports all of these elements and then staying one step ahead by evaluating your progress and adjusting course as necessary.

SECTION 2

Planning for Social Media Success



Created by Bob Perman - IgniteSocialMedia.com

"There is no doubt that the City of Leduc is benefiting from the timely access and broad reach of social media to engage with our residents and stakeholders. However, we know it's about more than gaining the advantages of the tools; it's about leveraging these advantages to support our core business and priorities. To achieve this, the City of Leduc has invested in a robust social media policy and a comprehensive social media strategy, which was developed collaboratively to ensure the full support of our organization and in context of our overarching communications objectives."

– Kenn Bur, Director,
Information Support Services

2.1

Creating an Effective Social Media Plan

There are eight basic elements that work together as part of three pillars to create a social media plan. They include:

Getting Ready

- Setting desired outcomes (connected with business outcomes)
- Identifying the most likely barriers to achieving the outcomes
- Identifying the most meaningful and realistic ways to overcome the barriers

Getting set

- Clearly identifying who you want to connect with and knowing where they participate
- Getting clear on the type of content that will resonate most effectively with your citizens and stakeholders
- Selecting the tools with the best capacity to reach your citizens and stakeholders and carry your content

Go

- Developing an action plan to engage online and start making connections
- Evaluating the effectiveness of your online engagement via social media

2.2

Getting ready

2.2.1 *Setting desired outcomes*

Desired outcomes are statements that reflect an imagined and desirable future. Consider your plan a map to a destination, and the desired outcomes as a description of your final destination. Given that social media is about engaging people, the outcomes reflect what you want people to either do (take action) or feel (attach a feeling to the municipality).

While taking action is a clearer outcome, some municipalities do strive to create a feeling. This is particularly true if you are seeking to build relationships and you want citizens or stakeholders to feel pride in the municipality or excitement about an upcoming possibility. The focus on emotion is what makes us human and tapping into these emotions is a powerful way to create a very human and meaningful connection to the municipality.

Your outcomes should be SMART outcomes. They should be Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely.

2.2.2 *Identifying barriers*

Barriers are statements that reflect the most salient and impactful obstacles to achieving the desired outcomes.

It is important to identify barriers because they provide a valuable focus on the places you need to work on in order to achieve your outcomes. It is also important to prioritize your barriers so that you can determine what is most likely to stand in your way and what efforts will provide the greatest return on your outcomes. Sometimes you will need the help of colleagues to identify and prioritize legitimate barriers.

UNDERSTANDING SMART OUTCOMES

SPECIFIC –

Outcomes that are exact and focus on the five W's.

Goals that are specific help to define expectations clearly and, typically, are written around verbs. Focus on answering WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE and WHY questions.

MEASURABLE –

Concrete criteria for measuring progress.

When you measure your progress, you stay on track, reach your target dates, and experience the exhilaration of achievement that spurs you on to continued effort required to reach your goal.

To determine if your goal is measurable, ask HOW questions:

How much? How many? How will I know when it is accomplished?

ATTAINABLE –

Outcomes that can be achieved through good planning.

Goals that may seem out of reach move closer and closer when you set attainable goals that encourage you to reach further.

REALISTIC –

Outcomes that you are both willing and able to work on.

Be sure that every goal represents substantial progress.

A high goal is frequently easier to reach than a low one because a low goal exerts low motivational force. Some of the hardest jobs you ever accomplished actually seem easy simply because they were a labour of love.

TIMELY –

A goal should be grounded within a time frame.

Your time frame gives you a reason to stop and deliberately reflect on your progress and adapt your course, if necessary.

2.2.3 *Selecting opportunities*

While there may be dozens of opportunities available to you as a municipality, you will want to identify opportunities that are most likely to overcome your barriers. Sometimes thinking about things as an opportunity instead of a barrier will help you identify a barrier that you didn't previously think about. In any case, you identified the barriers as the reasons that you are not already achieving your outcomes. If you look for opportunities to overcome the barriers then you should be working deliberately to achieve the desired outcomes.

2.3

Getting set

2.3.1 Identifying the people most likely to help you achieve your outcomes

In traditional communications planning, the people that are most likely to help you achieve your outcomes are called target audiences. In engagement, the term audience is a bit of a misnomer. While you will broadcast some information out via social media, it is more likely that you will be pursuing feedback or a conversation. In this case, your audience becomes a group of participants.

Your primary participants are the people or groups of people who can have the greatest impact on achieving your desired outcomes. The secondary participants are the people or groups of people who can also play important roles in achieving your desired outcomes.

Again, with traditional communications planning, you tend to focus on an audience that passively receives content. With social media, your primary participants may not be your intended receivers. You may in fact choose to make credible people who are influencers or opinion leaders on a topic your primary participants, and seek ways to have them reach out to your intended receivers. If your barriers tend to focus on credibility, lack of relationships with the people that you want to engage, or challenges connecting with your intended participants, one of your primary opportunities may be to engage credible people who can work on your behalf to connect with others to achieve your desired outcomes.

2.3.2 Developing your content

Content development is also commonly referred to as tactics. Content can be words, pictures, video, questions, etc. Perhaps the most important element of content development is thinking about the **impact** that it will have on the participants.

In any case, it is very important to think about the nature of your municipality and what your citizens and stakeholders need in terms of knowledge/emotion to determine how to approach your content.

Content and conversations on social media should be professional, and intended to inform and engage. Content curated or shared by your municipality should be accurate, relevant and consistent with municipal policies, procedures and guidelines. It should reflect the municipality's official position on any given topic, yet be presented in a format and with content that will effectively reach and engage participants. There will be occasions when pure information needs to be delivered, such as during emergency management or project updates, and there will be times when highly creative storytelling or light-hearted imagery will be effective to invoke a feeling or invite people into an opportunity. Strategic content development is critical in effective use of social media and will be a factor in tool selection.

MAKING YOUR CONTENT COUNT

As you develop your content, give some consideration to how you will package and disseminate it. These three things – content, packaging, dissemination – work together to have the most meaningful impact for the people that you are working to engage.

The following positioning model provides some helpful tips on making the most of your content.

Each of the six segments of the model introduces one way that you can leverage content for the greatest impact. The model is colour-coded to show direct relationships that focus on credible and efficient distribution of messaging (blue tones), the human experience (orange tones), and demonstrating progress (green tones).

For example, if one of your desired outcomes focuses on evoking an emotional response (i.e. pride or excitement) then storytelling and humanizing (orange tones) is a valuable way to approach your content. Or, if for example, you are seeking input or ideas from your citizens or stakeholders then continuity and a compelling why (demonstrating progress) can be valuable tactics for your content.



APPENDIX RESOURCES:
**Guiding Principles for
Content Curation** >

Source: Town of Hinton Municipal Communications Plan 2014-2017

2.3.3 Selecting your tools

While it may feel counter-intuitive, picking your social media tool is your final element of preparation. This isn't to say that you won't have a tool in the back of your mind as you explore your desired outcomes, barriers, opportunities, participants and content. It's more to say that it is important to explore all of these other areas first and think critically about the tools that you have in mind.

To assist your selection, consider the purpose of each tool and the primary reasons why people use it.

Social Media Tool	Purpose	Why people use it
 FACEBOOK	Brings people who know each other or have shared interests together.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain offline connections • Keep in touch with old acquaintances • Learn about offline connections
 TWITTER	Topical microblogging service that lets users send text-based posts of up to 140 characters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information source • Keep in touch with many • Give and receive information • Learn • Keep track of hot topics • Segment information
 LINKEDIN	Connects people to trusted contacts and helps exchange knowledge, ideas and opportunities with a broader network of professionals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make new connections • Information sharing (Groups) • Marketing/Sales • Recruitment • Maintain connections
 YOUTUBE	A video sharing website where users can upload, view, share and comment on videos.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information seeking • Entertainment • Interpersonal expression

Adapted from Johnson and Yan (2009); Quan-Hass and Young (2010).



Use Twitter to give timely information on municipal services.

Source: Town of Strathmore Twitter Feed.

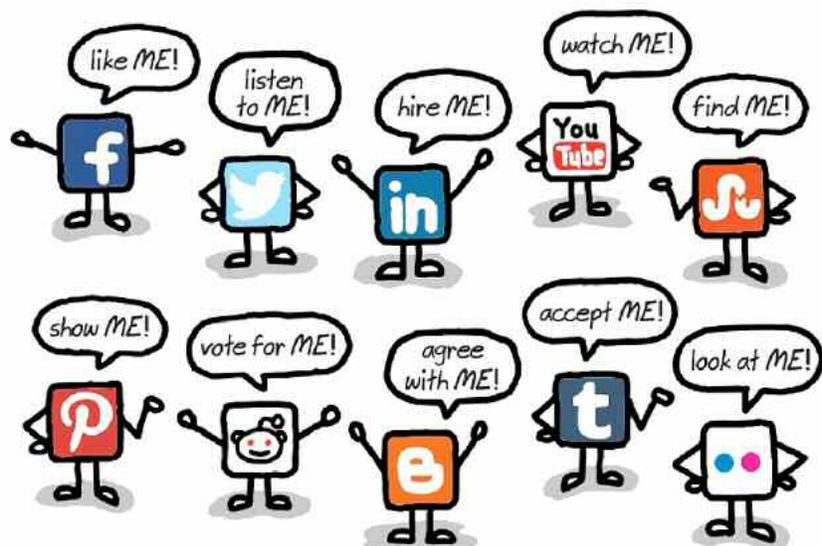
It is also important to do some investigation of what tools are being used by your participants. Conduct searches on some of the social media channels using key words that relate to your municipality. As you explore the content consider these questions:

- What am I noticing?
- Who is participating?
- What content are they sharing and commenting on?
- Where could my municipality make an impact?
- Are there any credible and active online ambassadors and thought-leaders in a position to share content on our municipality?
- Where will our municipality benefit most from being more social?

Upon reflection you might identify several tools that could work for you. However, in the process of working through your plan, you might discover that your participants are highly active on one particular tool and less active on another. At this stage, it is important that you prioritize your tools. You might find that there are several tools that you want to start using. However, it is always best that you start with one, or maybe two tools, and get comfortable with them. Do them really, really well before you start adding other tools. Quite often municipalities attempt to juggle multiple tools with mediocre performance on all of them. It is better to do one thing exceptionally well than many things somewhat well.

Finally, try to keep the number of accounts per platform at a minimum. The more accounts you have, the more you segment your own community and minimize your reach. There are exceptions to the rule; well-known programs, events, or places that are associated with the municipality but have no immediate logical affiliation with the municipality in the minds of citizens can in fact have a separate account.

Social MEdia



wronghands1.wordpress.com ©John Atkinson, Wrong Hands

CREATING AN EFFECTIVE ACTION PLAN

Schedule time to plan

Set aside some time each week to plan out your social media.

Build a content library

Build a library of ideas and resources (e.g. - questions, videos, themes, articles that can be used to curate and create content).

Consider a theme

Content can be generated from over-arching themes that can be broken down into more specific topics (e.g. - community service, community engagement, local heroes).

Choose dates and times for your content

Map out when you plan to post content – make note of the business goals that it supports.

Choose a lead

Decide who will be responsible for posting the content, monitoring the activity, and engaging, as required.

Select or create the content

As much as possible, be prepared with pre-generated, pre-approved content that aligns with your municipality's policies, processes and business priorities.

Schedule time to monitor

Set aside time to monitor the response and engage with participants, as required.

Take notes

Note any specific success, challenges or mis-steps so that you can learn from them and refer to them at later dates.

➤ APPENDIX RESOURCES:
Social Media Plan Template

➤ **Social Media Action Plan**

2.4

Taking action

2.4.1 Your plan

Your action plan will describe how and when you're going to put your social media tools to use. It will describe the content that you are going to post via a tool and the steps that you will take to do it. Given that your plan is about the actions you will take, it is important to identify when and who will take those actions. Your plan will identify how and when the work will get done.

2.4.2 Social media protocols

A successful implementation of social media requires frequent and ongoing curating and maintenance. Content must be fresh, relevant and meaningful to participants and should be updated regularly. Ineffective monitoring and lack

of awareness of issues being discussed will erode the confidence of participants. Failing to respond to questions from citizens in a timely manner can frustrate followers and diminish the overall impact of your municipal organization's use of social media.

POSTING FREQUENCY

In order to develop an ongoing presence worth visiting and to create a following among your participants, establish a routine schedule of posts and tweets per week to create consistency, maximize awareness, and deliver timely responses to comments and messages.

MONITORING

Engagement is a two-way process. To be successful, it involves an investment in the art of listening. It is recommended that time is spent monitoring various social media tools for topics important to key participants.



SOCIAL MEDIA RESOURCE GUIDE VIGNETTE CITY OF CALGARY

In June 2013, when Calgary was hit by some of the worst flooding in Alberta history, information sharing was imperative. People lives depended on it, and the City of Calgary responded.

In crisis communications, the answer is always as much information as quickly and as widely spread as possible. While traditional communications mediums, including radio and television, are still a critical part of sharing emergency information broadly and effectively, social media creates ways for residents to actively play an important role in emergency response. Residents, by the nature of their relationships, helped the City of Calgary disseminate accurate and timely information within their personal networks.

The City, which had accumulated six years experience in the social media sphere prior to the event, put an extraordinary emphasis on social media during the emergency. Leveraging social media was one element of its extensive emergency communications planning, recognizing that each tool has its place. As an example, door-to-door visits to announce evacuations could not be replaced by social media use. However, updates on the situation, details about where to access support, and information about City services were available online. When the City called its emergency plan into action, it included a strong emphasis on web communication - including use of its website, blogging and social media.

Throughout the flood response, the City of Calgary posted 1,483 tweets and received about 20,000 retweets. Its Twitter followers shot up from 54,000 to 80,000. The City was lauded for its effective use of hashtags to help its followers sort and find relevant information. It was also recognized, thanks in large parts to its strong planning and experience with the tools, for making effective use of an assortment of tools. Outside of Twitter, the City of Calgary website had 1.1 million visitors and its 272 YouTube posts were watched 460,000 times.

Source: Calgary Herald, February 2, 2014

It is also important to make relevant departments, programs and policy areas aware of any active conversations related to municipal services or the municipality's reputation, and to seek their input and expertise to support any planning and content creation in response to or relative to these observations.

While it remains necessary that some of the monitoring work will be manual in nature, use of analytic platforms (e.g. - Google Analytics, Hootsuite) help automate and streamline this monitoring process. These tools will allow your municipality to use its resources in the most efficient manner possible.

Monitoring should take place during regular business hours, with the exception of emergency communications. Emergency activity should follow your municipality's emergency preparedness or business disruption plan.

ONLINE INTERACTIONS

Central to the question of resourcing is the potential need for timely interaction and responses to public questions and comments, and the potential for high volume citizen commentary. In some instances a quick answer may be appropriate for a simple inquiry, while other instances may involve working with various departments and the Mayor and members of Council to provide information about sensitive topics that may be controversial in the community.

Monitoring, interaction and response to questions and comments should take place during regular business hours and these hours should be posted on each of the municipal organization's social media accounts.



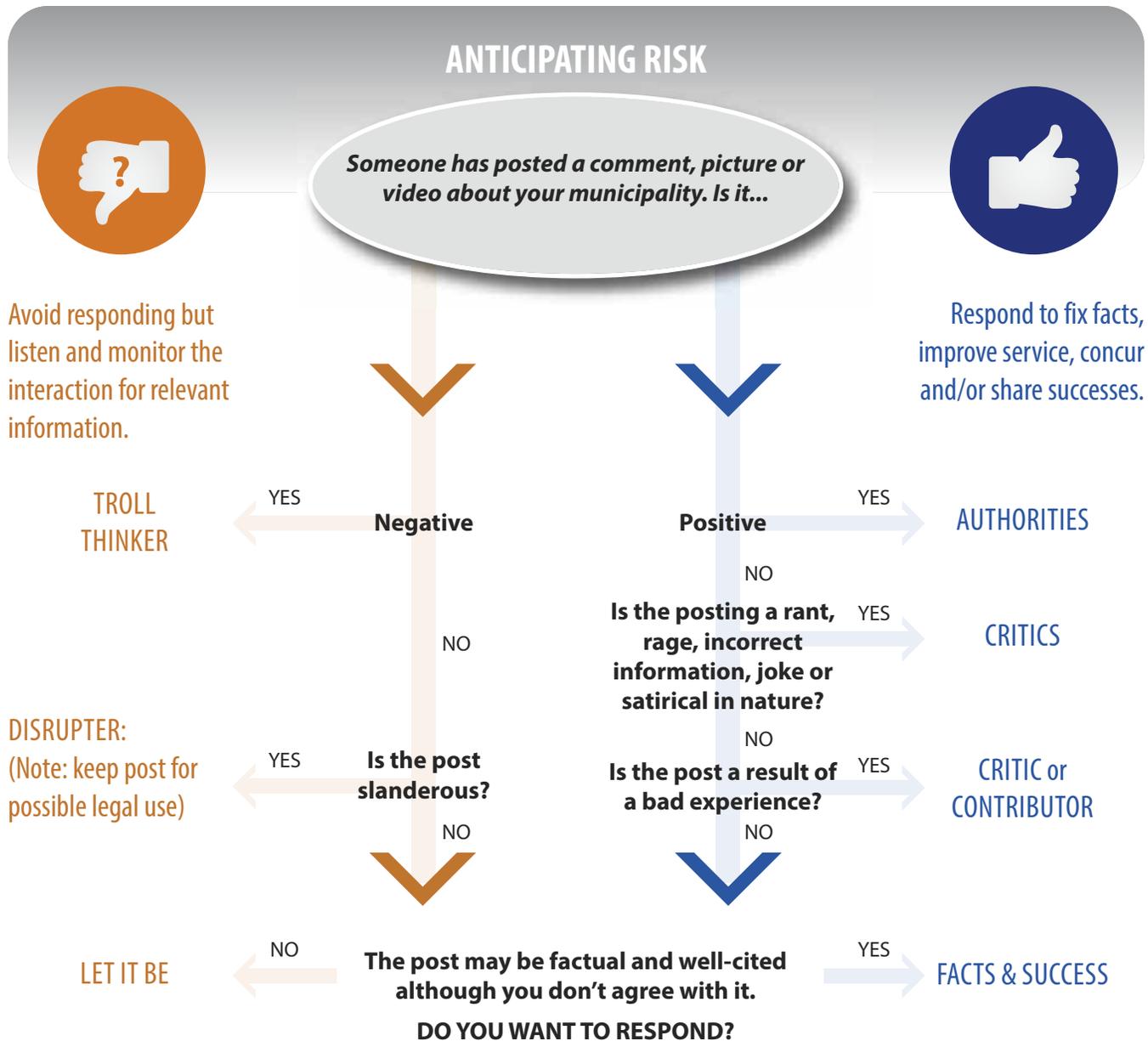
DISTRACTORS ARE EVERYWHERE. HERE IS WHO YOU CAN EXPECT TO ENCOUNTER THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA:

- Trolls/Thinkers:** May disrupt conversation; may have something to contribute but generally are against the issue or municipality.
- Disrupters:** Wants to engage to create havoc; sometimes bordering on slander.
- Critics:** Judges who can sometimes be supportive.
- Contributors:** Active contributors.
- Authorities:** Influencers who are supportive of the municipality or topic.

TIPS FOR DEALING WITH COMMON ONLINE INTERACTIONS

1. Respond as quickly as possible or when you can and where appropriate reference your Terms of Use.
2. Be honest and transparent, and share relevant information.
3. Maintain professionalism but don't follow a script or key messages, be human.
4. Provide an alternative means of communicating. Move the conversation offline as necessary and if possible.
5. Record negative content along with any official responses (e.g. - screen shot).

Given that some risk is inevitable in social media, the following decision tree diagram offers guidance in navigating online interactions. As the diagram suggests, it is not necessary to respond to every post, tweet, or comment. However, it is important to respond to fix facts, improve service, concur and/or share municipal successes.



Adapted from "Air Force Web Posting Response Assessment" US Air Force Public Affairs Agency

2.4.3 Evaluating your progress

With your action plan in place, you're set to publish content. The good news is that social media curators like you have access to an unprecedented amount of information about how your content is received and acted upon. The other news – neither good nor bad – is that data about your content is irrelevant unless it tells you something about your progress toward your municipality's desired outcomes and overall business priorities.

To conduct meaningful evaluation, you need to commit to four acts:

1. Set meaningful metrics.
2. Track your metrics at set frequencies.
3. Analyze the metrics relative to your desired outcomes and overarching municipal priorities.
4. Take action to improve your social media use and engagement practices relative to what you learn about the impact of your content.

SETTING MEANINGFUL METRICS

Meaningful performance metrics tell you something valuable about how you are progressing toward your desired outcomes. If, as part of your engagement, you're seeking to inform homeowners living in a specific subdivision about an engagement opportunity then you choose metrics that help you understand how many people from the subdivision have been exposed to your content. On the other hand, if you want to enhance these citizens' pride in their subdivision or overall community, then you need to choose metrics that help you understand people's sentiment.

While there are easily understandable common social media metrics, including:

1. Visitors and sources of traffic;
2. Network size (followers, fans, members); and
3. Quantity of commentary about product or service.

These broad metrics rarely tell you anything meaningful about your path to your desired outcomes. The trick to good evaluation is to identify specifically what social data is relevant – and to be sure that it is data that can be analyzed so that you know exactly what it means. As a general rule, choose rates and more nuanced metrics and avoid overemphasizing or giving too much weight to simple counts and totals.



FIVE SOCIAL MEDIA METRICS TO CONSIDER

1. REACH

Reach is a simple term to denote the number of people that you are reaching through your social media content. The potential benefit of tracking your reach is that you know how many people will receive your content – this is your potential # of participants.

A RELEVANT METRIC: Participant growth rate – a percent-change in audience over a set period of time, which helps to define your social media momentum.

HOW TO ANALYZE THIS METRIC:

What events match up with your highest growth rate periods? This will tell you what your participants are interested in.

A VAGUE METRIC: # of followers – simply a statement of people with a potential interest in your content.

2. ENGAGEMENT

Engagement in social media metrics refers to the amount of activity taking place through your social media profile/space.

A RELEVANT METRIC: Average engagement rate – the amount of activity in your space relative to your reach (your fans, followers or friends).

HOW TO ANALYZE THIS METRIC:

What events match up with your highest percentage of engagement? This will tell you what sparks participation amongst your participant base.

A VAGUE METRIC: # shares or likes – this is possibly a sea of silent followers who are unwilling to be invest in an active relationship.

3. ACQUISITION

Acquisitions refer to the traffic coming to your profile or page. This traffic can be broken down into visitors and repeat visitors.

A RELEVANT METRIC: Visitor frequency rate – the number of times people view your content.

HOW TO ANALYZE THIS METRIC:

This metric can be broken down into return visitors and new visitors. Return visitors provide insight into the depth of their relationship to you or your municipal organization. New visitors lend to your measure of reach.

A VAGUE METRIC: # of visitors – this gives you a sense of how many people are arriving at your content but no insight into the nature of their relationship to your content.

4. CONVERSION

Conversions refer to people taking online action – it measures the number of people that come to your profile or page and engage in a particular action.

A RELEVANT METRIC: Assisted social conversions – the number of people that take action online as a result of an invitation through a social space.

HOW TO ANALYZE THIS METRIC:

Where are your conversions coming from? These are the social media tools, content and tactics that persuade your participants to engage.

A VAGUE METRIC: # of click throughs – this gives you a sense of the number of people who take an action but not what persuaded them to get involved.

5. ACTIVITY

Activity refers to connecting social media activity with your desired outcomes in a direct way. It includes seeking out examples of cost savings correlated with increased public reach through social media and fewer direct inquiries.

A RELEVANT METRIC: Customer service savings – the average time associated with customer service inquiries multiplied by the hourly cost of customer service.

HOW TO ANALYZE THIS METRIC:

Is your investment in social media communication and engagement resulting in fewer hours of customer service? What types of inquiries are being reduced as a result of social media use?

A LESS RELEVANT METRIC: # of social media posts – there is a strong assumption here that increased online activity is meeting the needs of your citizens and stakeholders.

Adapted from Chitwood, L. (2013), City of Leduc Social Media Strategy and Eckerling, D. (2014).



FOUR METRICS WHICH COME WITH A LOT OF HYPE AND OFFER LITTLE VALUE

Bounce rate – Social media users tend to have short attention spans, and short visits aren't necessarily a negative.

Direct click-through rates – Yes, you want your fans, followers and friends to click on links to your websites and other content. However, clicking through doesn't necessarily result in any benefits.

Potential reach – Your potential reach is a very misleading metric. Potential has to be achieved – your participant growth and engagement rate will tell you if you're achieving reach.

Influence – Beyond identifying potential influencers in your area, this metric is so limited (and the equation so complicated) that it can't be used to inform meaningful decisions.

TRACK YOUR METRICS AT SET FREQUENCIES

It's your trends and patterns - not your individual numbers - that hold value for evaluating your success with social media. While it may be tempting to make decisions based on a particularly high rate of engagement in response to posting content, it is more realistic and truthful to measure your progress over time.

You're not on your own to do this. There are as many social media analysis tools available as there are social media tools. The majority of them offer highly visual dashboards that allow you to track any number or combination of metrics across one or a number of social media tools. Google Analytics is a very robust and commonly used social media analysis tool that provides easy to read charts and graphs – a sure way to seek out trends and patterns if you go looking for them. Google always offers a vast array of instructional videos to help new users become acquainted with its format and the value of its data.

Again, it's critical to be clear about which metrics you want to monitor *and* analyze. Not all of them are relevant to your desired outcomes and municipal priorities. Not all of them are simple metrics to track or understand. There are some metrics that require custom tools and custom reports. By choosing your metrics wisely and reviewing them on a set frequency, and after any significant events, you will get the best picture of data to analyze in context of your municipal outcomes.



➤ **APPENDIX RESOURCE:
Analytic Tool Options**

ANALYZE THE METRICS RELATIVE TO YOUR DESIRED OUTCOMES AND OVERARCHING MUNICIPAL PRIORITIES

Analysis is interpretation or making meaning of the data once it has been measured and quantified. This is application of the data to decision-making processes for how to manage social media efforts.

Properly focused analysis creates a comprehensive narrative for the municipality's social media progress over time, to show where actions have been successful (or not), why and how actions make a difference, and what the impact means for future planning and the implementation of your strategy as a whole. It also reveals where attention and resources may be required.

There are three main elements that should be reviewed regularly - content, relevance and impact.

Content – The content should align with desired social media and overarching communications goals. It should meet the content management and protocol outlined in your strategy. Evaluation should include performance measures to determine how well the content is contributing to the desired outcomes.

Relevance – Participation is at the centre of relevance. We often focus on the tools related to social media and less on the social – relational – focus of the interactions. Both the social media tool and content must be relevant to the participants and meet a need.

Impact – The foundation of communication is to make an impact – either to invite a behaviour or invoke a feeling in participants. Impact considers how effective social media use is in inviting the desired behaviours or invoking a desirable emotional response.

With respect to the balance between quantitative and qualitative measures:

- quantitative results will help provide an overarching picture of the municipality's achievements, help to identify trends and patterns in participant interactions, and support the municipality's efforts to maximize communication and engagement efforts; and
- qualitative results can help to provide a deep dive into what people are feeling, noticing, experiencing and perceiving, as well as provide means to understand the overarching narrative, system and patterns at work.

It is important to measure success of particular initiatives and not just focus on compilations of analytics; analytics are just one indicator of success that contribute to achieving goals. Based on the results of analyzing metrics, adjustments should be made to your strategy accordingly. Given the characteristics and dynamics of social media, it is important to consistently monitor progress and be flexible, allowing results and interactions to lead to re-evaluation and realignment of the plan.

Source: City of Leduc Social Media Strategy

TAKE ACTION TO IMPROVE YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES RELATIVE TO WHAT YOU LEARN ABOUT THE IMPACT OF YOUR CONTENT

The entire focus of evaluation is to arrive at an evidence-based report card on your social media performance. It is through linking your metrics (your online behaviour) with your desired outcomes and municipal priorities (offline action) that you can determine whether your social media effort is having a positive impact.

Your analysis of your social media metrics relative to what is taking place in your offline environment should inform your next steps. It is the perfect opportunity to consider how your use of social media is affecting your offline engagement activities and the quality of decision-making that comes from it. Your metrics should help you to determine whether social media has influenced attendance at engagement opportunities, project support, customer service satisfaction, preliminary exploration of highly sensitive community issues, and more.

It is beneficial for municipalities to continually analyze the available data to:

- identify and enhance winning actions;
- identify and eliminate unhelpful actions;
- identify and adjust non-optimum strategies;
- continuously adapt to key message and priority changes; and
- ensure effective steps are taken towards achieving the goals of your strategy.



➤ *APPENDIX RESOURCES:
Evaluation Guide*

2.5 Policy Development

Policies are essentially the bottom line for effective, meaningful and ethical online communication. They set the boundaries to help the municipality move forward its communication practices - particularly when new technology is stretching conventional approaches and expectations surrounding communication.

2.5.1 *Administrative Policy*

By investing in an administrative policy, municipalities take steps to encourage and empower employees to engage effectively using social media, and also demonstrate support to ensure that its representatives engage in ways that are helpful, build relationships and, in turn, advance and help achieve municipality's goals.



"As a village of nearly 700, we're a close-knit community and we recognized Facebook as a tool that we could use to amplify our voice with residents. We invested in a social media policy at the outset; it was an effective way to assure we leverage the social nature of the tools relative to how we work as an organization."

Joanne Horton
Chief Administrative Officer,
Village of Marwayne

There are nine elements that should be considered in social media policy development:

1. Employee Access

Increasingly social media sites are blurring the line between personal, professional, and municipal use, raising new questions of which employees may access social media sites and what should be the process for gaining access.

Municipalities are able to manage access in two ways:

- allowing employee access to social networking sites and designated employee access to corporate social media accounts;
- by limiting the types of sites that are approved for employee access; security, network infrastructure, workflow impact and business rationale are key considerations when granting employee access.

2. Account Management

Account management encompasses the creation, maintenance, and destruction of social media accounts. Establishing an account on a social media site provides an employee with the full range of tools and capabilities for that site, such as joining networks or posting information. The lack of a clearly defined policy on account management may result in a situation where the municipal organization's leadership does not have a handle on what types of corporate social media accounts are being established, maintained, or closed by their employees. Therefore, an important element to a social media policy is establishing who may set up a municipal social media account, as well as a procedure for closing a municipal account.

3. Citizen Conduct

Social media sites, unlike more traditional media such as newspaper or radio, allow for instant two-way public communication between government and citizens. Citizens are able to directly post audio, video, and text to many social media sites. Municipalities must decide how to support two-way communication and how to handle this engagement with citizens. For municipalities that decide to elicit citizen feedback via their corporate social media channels, terms of use for acceptable conduct of citizens are often developed.

Terms of use statements provide a transparent means of sharing the municipal organization's expectations of citizen conduct while interacting with it through social media. The statement should indicate that the municipal organization reserves the right to not post or delete content without notification that:

- includes foul language, vulgarities or sexually explicit content;
- is offensive to an individual or an organization, rude in tone, discriminatory or abusive;
- solicits, advertises, and/or promotes particular services, products, or political parties, advocacy groups or organizations;
- infringes on copyrights or trademarks;
- is considered spam; and/or
- is off topic.

Terms of use statements should also consider the implications of third-party content posted to the municipal organization's social media channels such as community event information, and that reference to any third-party business, event, service or product does not constitute or imply endorsement, recommendation or favouring by the municipal organization, its employees and/or elected officials.

4. Acceptable Use

Acceptable use policies typically outline a municipality's position on how employees are expected to use municipal social media resources.

Use of social media accounts on behalf of the municipal organization should align its strategic direction, corporate values, and branding or visual identity guidelines.

Efforts should be made to treat all businesses, organizations and individuals equally, and to refrain from endorsing or showing favouritism to any of them. It is important that municipalities identify, monitor and review "follow", "favourite", "like" or, "share" criteria for municipal social media accounts in order to avoid perceived endorsement, surveillance, or impartiality.

5. Employee Conduct

Typically, professional employee conduct is already governed by policies such as an ethical code of conduct that addresses what is "right" and "wrong" in terms of employees' behaviour, and sets out the consequences should a violation occur.

In addition to a standard conduct code that addresses things such as racially offensive language, it is important to address issues more specific to social media, including respecting the social media channel terms of service, striving for transparency and openness in interactions, and being respectful in all online interactions.

It is important that employees are aware that information published on the internet can impact and reflect back upon the municipality, is not personal or private, and may be subject to discovery proceedings in legal actions and Alberta *Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection Act (FOIP)* inquiries.

Outlining which aspects are simply recommendations for personal behaviour and which ones are potential grounds for dismissal is useful for employees and supervisors trying to navigate and define the parameters of the personal/professional divide.

6. Content Management

Content management identifies who is allowed to post content on municipal social media channels and who is responsible for ensuring its accuracy. Content management can range from municipalities exerting minimal editorial controls over content by allowing employees to write freely on various topics related to the municipal organization to keeping responsibility for content creation and management solely with the communications department. Clarifying who is responsible for curating, posting, and responding to content on behalf of the municipal organization supports consistent, accurate and timely engagement. It is equally important to identify if this responsibility is reassigned when the municipality's disaster service plan is activated.

7. Security

In light of the new uses, users, and technologies related to social media use, it is important for municipalities to ensure security of municipal data and technical infrastructure. Two areas should be considered related to security – technical and behavioural.

The technology concerns focus on password security, functionality, authentication of identity using public key infrastructures, and virus scans. The municipality's information technology employee(s) has a role in supporting these elements.

The behavioural security concerns refer to those threats that result from employees' intentional or inadvertent actions when engaging with social media sites and

tools. For example, employees may inadvertently post information about themselves or the municipal organization on social media sites, which attackers then use to manipulate users. A related concern is the inadvertent posting of citizens' personal and protected information by municipal employees. While these concerns are not new, there is a need to consider how to protect confidential information that is personally identifiable or could endanger the municipality.

8. Legal Issues

The use of social media tools raises the issue for many municipal organizations about how to ensure that their employees are abiding by all existing laws and regulations. Municipalities may choose to take a general approach to legal issues, using generic text that requires all employees to adhere to all applicable laws and regulations without actually specifying which laws and regulations are applicable. Others may choose to point to specific areas of law such as freedom of information and privacy protection, public records management, public disclosure, and accessibility.

It is advantageous to proactively address potential legal issues by endorsing the use of various disclaimers on social media sites. One example of a standard disclaimer for use by employees engaging in social media activities is intended to detach the opinions and actions of individual employees from their employer – *“Any opinions, views or comments expressed are personal and do not reflect those of my employer.”*

Other standard disclaimers concern public records, external links, endorsements, copyright, privacy, and offensive behaviour.

9. Emergency Communications

The immediacy of social media enables efficient and effective dissemination of information in the event of an emergency.

The use of social media during emergencies should align with the municipality's emergency or disaster services plan identifying responsibilities for external communications, including social media.

Adapted from Hrdinová, Helbig & Peters (2010).

2.5.2 Elected officials and social media policy

Elected officials have an opportunity to play a very important role in the everyday conversations taking place online about the municipal organization, as well as its service initiatives and policies.

Having a policy in place for elected officials demonstrates leadership, integrity and accountability to members of the public, as they know what to expect from their public officials, and models the way for the municipal employees.

A social media policy for elected officials should differ from the policy for municipal employees, relative to roles, responsibilities and relationship to the community; however, it should also align with the administrative policy by demonstrating a united commitment to respectful, effective and ethical communication practices.

A policy specific to elected officials helps to address concerns related to complex issues such as:

- how to represent personal versus municipal views;
- how and when to communicate official decisions versus personal input into decisions;
- who communicates and when during complex issues or emergency response;
- how to manage endorsements or community relationships online;
- the relationship between municipal employees using social media and elected officials; and
- the connection back to other relevant elected official policies.



3

Making It Happen

You're interested in social media, you see the benefits, you understand the potential pitfalls, and you've given some strong consideration to how you'd make it work for your municipality. Yet, you may still have a nagging question: How do we know if we, as a municipal organization, are prepared and ready to be active in the social media sphere?

The answer isn't automatically yes. There are certain conditions that will set you up for success in the social realm, and they focus on a lot more than logging in and sharing out content.

SECTION 3

Making It Happen

3.1

Assessing social media readiness

Assessing your social media readiness answers one overarching question – Are you ready to evolve from engaging in social behaviour to engaging in social business?

What's the difference? As a municipal representative, whether an elected official or member of administration, you work in an internal environment and an external environment. If you're emphasizing the external environment, which starts with an emphasis on your citizens and stakeholders, then you're focused on engaging in social behaviour. If you're emphasizing internal conversations around strategy, technology and governance initiatives in order to most effectively serve your citizens and stakeholders then you're engaging in social business.

In *A Brief History of Social Media* (Section 1.1), a paradigm shift was described. Broadcast media focused on a 1:many capability that emphasized on a controlled message to a mass audience. The intent was to deliver a message to an audience. Social media focuses on a many:many capability that emphasizes transparency and exchange. The intent is to invoke participation and achieve engagement. For municipal organizations to be effective social media users, they need to transform their technologies, talent, processes and governance models.

This internal transformation isn't going to happen overnight, which is part of the reason that many social media users are content to focus on engaging in social behaviour. However, as municipal organizations come to realize that social business is not a trend, they will benefit from evolving their cultures, internal communications, governance, training, technologies, and policies to support effective social business.

To assess a municipal organization's current social media readiness, it is critical to consider three pillars:

- People;
- Governance; and
- Technology.

Adapted from Brito, M. (2010)



1. People

The first pillar focuses on your municipality's most important assets – your people. Your people are key to your success with social media. You need to be clear on who will be involved in your social media use, what role they will play, and how they can be set up for success.

Some important questions to ask yourself:

- What do you want to achieve from using social media?
- Who is in the best position to help you achieve these outcomes?
- Who has the most credibility with your citizens and stakeholders?
- Is there a particular person or team that is equipped with the knowledge of social networks and social media tools to take the lead on this work?
- Does the person/team member have expertise with a particular set of tools? And are these the tools that make the most sense for your desired outcomes and the people you wish to engage?
- Does the person/team member have planning capabilities or will they simply be in charge of implementation?
- Is there a group of people that could work together to form a social media team, focused on a strong strategy and content planning?
- If you're using social media within the municipality, are the sites coordinated?
- Who is responsible for engagement within your municipality, and how will they work with the social media leads?
- What internal human resources are available to support and implement social media use? (Consider content creation, network development, evaluation, connections to other teams.)

2. Governance

The second pillar focuses on the policies, processes and decision-making authority that, together, represents good social media governance. You need to be clear on the boundaries for social media use and participation, the processes that you will have in place to develop, share and respond to content, as well as the decision-making authority and approvals required to curate and post content (see *Section 2.5 Policy Development*).

Some important questions to ask yourself:

- Do our senior leaders support the use of social media to engage our citizens and stakeholders?
- Does social media complement our current ways of informing and engaging with our citizens and stakeholders? In what ways?
- What is our tolerance for risk?
- How do we manage issues now? How would a transparent environment on social media change the way we manage issues?
- How do our existing policies apply or relate to social media?
- Do we require a specific policy to help our employees and affiliates understand their responsibilities and accountabilities regarding social media use?
- How do the responsibilities and accountabilities of elected officials differ from those of administration?
- Who should have access to social media sites and applications, and why?
- Who has the authority to post content on behalf of the municipality?
- Does this authority change when the municipality is faced with an emergency or crisis?

- What social media tools and destination websites do we want to use to represent our municipality and work?
- How long has the municipality participated using social media, and which tools? What have been the results?
- If using social media, have we conducted any evaluation? What does it tell us about our approach to developing, sharing and responding to our citizens and stakeholders?
- Who needs to be involved in curating content?
- What will our annual budget be to use, curate and monitor social media activity?
- What unique value will social media offer our citizens and stakeholders?
- Will we support user-generated content being posted to our social media spaces?
- How will we coordinate content with our other communications efforts?
- How will content support our municipal priorities?
- Who creates content? Who approves it?
- Who has the authority to modify and remove content?
- What constitutes grounds to block users or modify/remove their content? How will this be communicated?
- How do employees and elected officials navigate their personal views relative to the municipality's views?
- Do we know enough about our citizens and stakeholders' needs to engage effectively using social media?

3. Technology

The third pillar focuses on your information technology protocols and tool sections that make social media use possible. You need to be clear on who has access to social media and in what capacity, which tools are considered acceptable for use, and what capacity the municipality has to support social media use and evaluation. Your information technology team is an important ally for municipal organizations that choose to adopt social media, as they are well-positioned to provide insight into the technical implications of the sites and applications.

Some important questions to ask yourself:

- Do we want to monitor employee activity? What are we looking for?
- Do we have the capacity to manage social media traffic?
- Where we will keep copies of our login and password information?
- How will we retain necessary records to comply with legislation such as *Alberta's Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection Act*?
- Will we allow access on mobile devices? What security issues does this present?
- What social media monitoring tools are available to us? What is our budget to use monitoring tools in our evaluation?
- What is the internal skill and capacity to set performance measures and conduct analysis?
- Will we use multiple social media sites and applications? How will we coordinate across these sites?

SWOT ANALYSIS



3.1.1 SWOT Analysis

Still feeling unsure about whether you are ready to embrace social media as part of your engagement activities? Consider a SWOT analysis.

SWOT stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The SW makes reference to your internal preparedness; they examine your strengths and weaknesses as a municipality. Be realistic about these and don't avoid looking at your weaknesses. The OT makes reference to your external context; they examine what you should embrace and avoid in your external environment.

To guide your social media readiness SWOT analysis, review the questions on the following pages. Answer those that are most applicable to your municipality.

Questions for internal elements (strengths and weaknesses)

Prior knowledge

1. What is the experience of your municipality on social platforms?
2. What you are doing well, and what are your challenges with them?
3. Do you already have a website or blog that creates valuable content?
4. Are you using social media to pursue any municipal organization goals?
5. What are the types of social media that you use, and how many platforms do you use?
6. How do you track activity in your municipality?
7. How do you track success?

Capacity

8. Do you have the enough employees for building an online presence of your municipality?
9. What is the motivation of employees for building an online presence?

Technology

10. Do you have an appropriate technology for building a presence?
11. How you can use that technology?
12. What are the knowledge and capability of employees to use that technology?
13. Do employees use different social media in their private life?
14. If they use something different, can you use it for work purposes?

Working relationships

15. What is the level of cooperation between employees in your municipal organization?
16. What is the level of cooperation between elected officials and administration?

Senior leadership support

17. Is management willing to use social media?
18. Does management know how to train employees to use this media?
19. Does your municipal organization support creativity?
20. Can you use that creativity to build a presence?

Questions for external elements (opportunities and threats)

Level of risk

1. Is external engagement through social media an opportunity or threat for your municipality?
2. Are there security threats to your municipality if you use third party technology?
3. Who presents the greatest risk to your municipality via social media and why?
4. What actions can you take if you feel the risk of maintaining a presence on social media is too high?
5. How will you manage negative comments or interactions?
6. How will emergency events affect your ability to deliver using social media?

Audience

7. What do your citizens and stakeholders value about your municipality?
8. What type of technology are they using to be present on social media?
9. What is the compatibility of your online presence and your citizens and stakeholders presence on these platforms?
10. Who else is using social media in your area?
11. Are there other influencers that you can collaborate with?
12. How much do you know about what your citizens and stakeholders are doing online?

Their expectations

13. How much do you know about what your citizens and stakeholders are seeking from your municipal organization?
14. What barriers exist within your community to people using social media to engage with your municipality (e.g. – high speed internet)?
15. What expectations will your citizens and stakeholders have that will make social media a challenge for your municipal organization?

Your expectations

16. How you want your citizens and stakeholders to communicate with you?
17. How do you want them to engage with you?

Business goals

18. What needs can your municipality meet by embracing social media?
19. What will social media achieve for you that isn't already being achieved?
20. What ongoing conversation do you want to be having with your citizens and stakeholders?

3.1.2 Next Steps

Your readiness assessment and SWOT analysis will determine whether your municipality is positioned to support citizen engagement through social media.

If you complete the Social Media Readiness Assessment Questionnaire and score below 10 then you should ensure that you complete a thorough SWOT analysis before proceeding. Once you have completed the SWOT, you will have a sense of what decisions and resourcing needs to be in place before you continue. You will want to ensure that you have the support of your organization, some sense of why social media has the potential to benefit your organization, and strong communications processes and risk management practices in place before you embrace social media.

If you complete the Social Media Readiness Assessment Questionnaire and score between 10 and 18 then you have a good foundation in place to develop and implement a social media plan. It is recommended that one of your first steps once you've determined that you want to proceed with social media is to conduct an audit. Your audit will provide useful information as you work to develop a meaningful and effective social media plan.

To conduct your audit, it is recommended that you create a corporate social media account for one or more social networking sites (i.e. Facebook, Twitter) and explore the online environment using key word searches with terms related to your municipal organization and community.

There are some important questions to consider to help you get a sense of the landscape:

- What are you noticing?
- Who is participating?
- What tools are they using?
- What content are they sharing?
- Where can your municipality make an impact?
- Where will your municipality benefit most from being more social and engaged?

It is good practice to spend approximately six to eight weeks monitoring the online environment. This may seem like a long period of time but it will give you a sense of the different dynamics present in the online environment. At the end of your listening period, there is benefit in developing a short report or briefing document to share with your decision-makers. Your listening experience should also inform the creation of your social media strategy (see Section 2 – *Planning for social media success*) and include budget and staff implications. There is also merit in sharing success stories and lessons learned related to municipal use of social media. This will demonstrate that you have considered potential opportunities and challenges external to your own municipal context making for a stronger business case.

The crux of determining your municipal organization's readiness is being realistic about what you can accomplish, and recognizing that stepping into new territory is bound to result in some missteps. The best thing you can do is be prepared to learn, have the support of your municipality to learn together, and address any missteps head on. Every action and every result is feedback and an opportunity to identify what works and what doesn't for your municipal organization. Learning is part of the process.

Guiding Principles for Content Curation

1. Consider the desired outcome of your post.

Be clear about the behaviour or feeling you want to elicit from your participants.

2. Tell them who you are.

Be personal by sharing your name.

3. Draw on emotion.

Relate to your participants through emotion. Everyone experiences emotions. While the situation might not be familiar, the feeling will be.

Six primary emotions:

- Fear – danger or threat
- Shame/Guilt – wronging someone
- Anger – unfair event
- Excitement – good to come
- Content – safe
- Sad – loss of connection

4. Mix it up

There is an endless list of ways to share content. Whatever you decide to use, make sure it complements your municipal goals.

Examples of types of content:

- Text
- Pictures
- Video
- Surveys/polls
- Statistics
- Ads

5. Share resources and content from credible and relevant sources.

Not all of the content needs to be original. Share information from other sources such as community groups and people of influence in the community. Ensure that whatever content you decide to share from other sources is accurate, credible and relates to your municipal goals.

6. Ensure content is accurate and consistent.

Content curated by the municipality needs to be reliable and consistent with municipal policies, procedures and guidelines.

7. Reflect the municipality.

Any content curated or shared on behalf of the municipality should reflect its official position on any given topic, yet be presented in a format and with content that will effectively reach and engage participants.

8. Be human.

Behind every post is a human being. Remind yourself and your participants of this fact. You are not just a municipality, employee or elected official, you are a person and that's how we connect with others.

By being and acting human, we take the edge off. To be an exceptional content curator, be as human as possible. The best posters/writers show courage, vulnerability and a willingness to make mistakes and learn from them.

Social Media Plan Template

Background *Provide a brief description of the municipality and its purpose for using social media.*

Desired Outcomes: reflect an imagined and desirable future for your municipality.
Describe your desired outcomes in one to two sentences.

Barriers: reflect the most salient and impactful obstacles to achieving the desired outcomes.
List and rank your barriers.

Participants:

Primary participants: is the person or group of people who can have the greatest impact on achieving your desired outcomes.

Secondary participants: are the people or groups of people who can also play important roles in achieving your desired outcomes.

List and prioritize your primary and secondary participants.

Content *Provide two to three examples of the content you would use to connect with your participants and achieve your desired outcomes.*

Tools *List which social media platform(s)/tool(s) you will use and explain your choice(s).*

Connect *Explain when and how you will go about affecting your participants to achieve your desired outcomes.*

Evaluation *Explain what metrics you will use to evaluate your success and how you will analyze them in context of your business goals and operating environment.*

Social Media Action Plan Template

Theme and sub-themes for the week:

M: _____
T: _____
W: _____
T: _____
F: _____
S: _____
S: _____

(Do not feel obligated to post content on a daily basis. Set a schedule that works for you.)

Who will be responsible for posting content and when:

M: Name/time _____

T: Name/time _____

W: Name/time _____

T: Name/time _____

F: Name/time _____

S: Name/time _____

S: Name/time _____

Who will be responsible for monitoring and responding to content:

M: _____
T: _____
W: _____
T: _____
F: _____
S: _____
S: _____

What will the content focus on:

M: _____
T: _____
W: _____
T: _____
F: _____
S: _____
S: _____

What were this week's results/lessons?

M: _____
T: _____
W: _____
T: _____
F: _____
S: _____
S: _____

Analytic Tool Options

Social media analysis has become big business. With the billions of exchanges taking place on the internet, there are as many analytics options as there are social media tools. For large municipalities that are looking to scrub the internet for information and filter it for specific messages and sentiments directly related to their needs, there are high cost, highly efficient services such as Sysomos, Visible Technologies and Oracle Social Cloud. These services are more than just analytics tools, they provide social media:

- monitoring;
- analysis;
- reports;
- social engagement features; and
- support.

For smaller municipalities with more modest budgets and social media needs, there are lighter options. Specifically, each social media tool offers its own set of analytics. The companies that create the tools are also experts in what can be measured, and they make basic measurements available to organizations. However, it is the responsibility of the organization to make use of the measurements, analyzing them in context of their needs and environments.

Facebook Insights

Insights provides Facebook Page owners with metrics around their content. By understanding and analyzing trends within user growth and demographics, consumption of content, and creation of content, you are better equipped to improve your engagement through Facebook.

LinkedIn Analytics

Gain insight into your network through

metrics and trends. Company page administrators can view rich data about their page divided into specific sections: updates, followers, and visitors.

Twitter Analytics

Measure engagement and learn how to make your tweets more successful. Explore the interests, locations, and demographics of your followers. Track how your tweets drive clicks, app installs, and retweets.

Smaller municipalities can also benefit from tools that offer a broader view of and deeper dive into your online activity. Two of the more popular and robust examples that come at a modest cost are Google Analytics and HootSuite.

Google Analytics

A free tool Google Analytics has become a great resource for social media analytics on your website. It includes a social reports feature that you can use to determine the conversion value of visitors from social sites as well as see how visitors from different social sites behave on your site. It also has an “Activity Stream” that shows in real-time how people are talking about your site on social networks.

Hootsuite

One of the most popular social media analytics tools, Hootsuite offers a single online dashboard to manage your social media accounts. This includes Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube and more.

In addition to helping you schedule posts and manage your social media content, Hootsuite also digs into what your social media activity means with its own set of analytics tools.

APPENDIX RESOURCES

Evaluation Guide

Adapted from Blanchard, O. (2011), Chitwood, L. (2013), City of Leduc Social Media Strategy, Eckerling, D. (2014), Kaushik, A.(n.d.), and Wasserman, S. and Faust, K. (1994).

Content Metrics

Measure the amount of time, outcomes and context of users' visits.

RESPONSIVENESS



- the number and quality of inquiries or discussions generated
- the average time it takes to receive responses to posts

VOLUME



What is the most engaging content?

- number of fan mentions, 'likes' and comments that illustrate engagements between users and the content
- number of unique people 'liking', sharing or commenting on posts



Top-performing tweets (clicks, favourites, replies, retweets)

- number of unique mentions, including replies / retweets



- number of times users engage with the municipality through 'thumbs up', comments and shares



- number of times users engage with the municipality through 'thumbs up', comments and shares

Relevance Metrics

Measure the number of desired actions users complete as a result of the social media strategy – whether that is engagement, access to information or requests for services.

CONVERSIONS



- number of completions of desired activities (e.g. - click-throughs, shares)

VIEWING



- number of total unique views for the municipality's channel
- number of minutes viewers watched of content on the municipality's channel
- the most viewed videos on the municipality's channel

LOYALTY



- percentage of users who access the municipality via social media

SENTIMENTS



- positive, negative and neutral engagements about the municipality or specific programs, events or topics
- quality and relevance of conversations
- number and quality/tone of comments on posts
- positive, negative or neutral keywords most associated with posted social media content

Impact Metrics

Measure high-level information on traffic to, and content usage of, social media activities.

SIZE



- the number of people who 'like' the municipality's page (fans)
- the number of unique users who have seen content associated with the municipality's page.



- the number of followers who subscribe to the feed



- the number of subscribers to the municipality's channel



- the number of followers for the municipality's corporate page

SOURCE:

- the number of unique visitors in a given time period and where those visitors came from
- amount of web traffic generated by the municipality's social media accounts

GROWTH:



- the difference between the number of fans, followers and subscribers from month-to-month

Social Media Policy Template

RELEVANT LEGISLATION: *List relevant legislation, for example: Alberta Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection Act (FOIP), Alberta Personal Information Protection Act.*

POLICY OBJECTIVE: *Identify your objective for the policy, for example: To define acceptable use and implementation of social media on behalf of XXX.*

1. Purpose *Explain the intent of the policy.*

2. Definitions *Define social media and key terminology.*

3. Responsibilities *Identify relevant staff positions with accountability, administrative and implementation responsibilities.*

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4. Employee Access *Identify who has access to municipal corporate social media accounts and whether all employees have access to social media accounts.*

5. Account Management *Identify key elements in the management of your social media accounts (e.g. – account creation and decommissioning and security requirements.)*

6. Acceptable Use *Identify criteria regarding professional use of social media (on behalf of the municipal organization) and personal use of social media by employees.*

7. Content Management *Identify criteria and key considerations in the creation of social media content, records management and retention, and emergency communications.*

Social Media Readiness Assessment Questionnaire

What is our tolerance for risk (e.g. - launching bold corporate initiatives, initiating new engagement tactics)?

- | | | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|------------------|----------------------------|
| 1
Extremely Low | 2
Low | 3
Neutral | 4
High | 5
Extremely High |
|---------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|------------------|----------------------------|

How does our municipality react to negative feedback?

- | | | | | |
|--|--------------------|--|---------------------|---|
| 1
Defensively
(e.g. - no comment) | 2
Slowly | 3
Slowly but
thoughtfully | 4
Quickly | 5
Quickly and
constructively |
|--|--------------------|--|---------------------|---|

Describe internal communication

- | | | | | |
|-------------------------|--|--|---|--|
| 1
Locked down | 2
Information moves
slowly from the
top-down | 3
Information moves
up and down | 4
Information moves
throughout the
municipality | 5
Information is timely
moves easily to the
people who need it |
|-------------------------|--|--|---|--|

What is my personal knowledge of social media?

- | | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|--|
| 1
I have no knowledge
of social media. | 2
I have very little
knowledge of
social media. | 3
I have some
knowledge of
social media. | 4
I know a lot
about social media. | 5
I am an expert
in social media. |
|---|---|--|---|--|

How are decisions made in our municipality?

- | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| 1
I don't understand
how decisions
are made. | 2
My supervisor is
responsible for relaying
decisions to me. | 3
There is a slow and
formal process in place
for getting decisions. | 4
I am able to make
decisions about what
affects me. | 5
I am able to make
decisions about my work
and get quick decisions
from decision-makers
when I need them. |
|--|--|--|--|--|

How did you do?

Total your score for each answer.

Score of 5 – 10: There are some important conversations that you should have before engaging with social media. It is important to understand the risks and benefits of social media, as well as to be as prepared as possible to manage them.

Score of 10 – 18: You have the foundation to develop an effective social media strategy and put it into play. Your municipality recognizes the importance of social behaviour and, with some focus, has the potential to embrace social business practices that align with and drive social media use.

Score 18 – 25: You have a strong internal focus on social business behaviours and, with a good plan to guide your actions, are ready to engage in and succeed using social media.

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Social Media Glossary

Analytics

The science of examining raw data to draw conclusions. Analytics focus on inference from data. The goal of analysts is to examine this data, looking for patterns in behaviour.

Big Data

Large sets of unstructured data; the data sets are massive and complex.

Block

A Twitter feature that enables you to prevent another user from:

- following you;
- adding you to their Twitter lists;
- having their mentions and replies appear in your notifications or mentions tab; and
- tagging you in a photo.

Blog

A website or page upon which an individual or organization records opinions, articles, links to other sites, etc. on a regular basis (Noun). The act of adding new material to a blog (Verb).

Comments

User-generated feedback in response to an online post.

Community Management

Investing and developing relationships with other online users around a common interest.

Company Page

A place for businesses to include information about their business and create updates about their business and their industry.

Connect

A tab in Twitter where all mentions, replies, retweets, and favourites can be found.

Connection

A link or relationship between two users. Each social network has its own unique terminology for connections (e.g. - Facebook refers to them as friends, LinkedIn refers to them as connections and Twitter refers to them as followers).

Content

Any kind of meaningful information (text, photos, videos, audio, etc.) on the Internet.

Content Curation

The process of sifting through the web to find the best and most relevant content for participants and then presenting it to them in a meaningful way.

Content Management System (CMS)

An online application that allows you to draft, share, edit, schedule, and index your content. Popular web content management systems make use of simple editors that allow you to create publish content without demanding a knowledge of code.

Creative Commons

A public copyright license that provides the rights to use and share otherwise copyrighted material.

Crowdsourcing

The process of leveraging your online community to assist in services, content and ideas for your business.

Digital Engagement

The use of electronic communication to expand and strengthen relationships with the public.

e-Government

Also known as Gov 2.0, e-gov is a digital interaction between government, citizens, businesses, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations. E-gov involves broadcasting information over the internet (such as services, public hearing schedules, notification), communicating between government and another organization, conducting transactions, and improving governance (Wikipedia).

Embed

To integrate data into the body of a file or document, in the form of a code; embedding can be used to share multimedia, sounds, fonts, and (unfortunately) viruses.

Engage

Attract users' attention and actively involve them in a conversation.

Engagement

The acts of talking to, messaging or otherwise interacting with other people; any interaction you have with other users.

Engagement Rate

Engagement rate is the percentage of people who saw your social media post and actively engaged with it (clicked the link, expanded the image attached, replied, liked, favourited, shared, retweeted, etc).

Forum

An online site, also known as a message board, where people can hold discussions.

Geolocation/Geotagging

The exact geographic location of an object, person, etc. Geographical coordinates can be embedded in media such as photos or videos, SMS messages, and websites to assist other users in accessing precise location information.

Gov 2.0

Gov 2.0, or Open Government, is a governing method that utilizes online, mobile and internet-enhanced face-to-face techniques to offer communication between government, citizens and stakeholders. The intent is to increase transparency of operations, improve public participation, and inspire collaboration and innovation through better government openness, accountability, and effectiveness

Handle

A synonym for "your account name".

Listening

Monitoring how a specific organization, program, service, company, or person is being discussed and/or perceived on the internet. Also referred to as social media monitoring.

Mash up

A web page or application that uses content from more than one source to create a single new service displayed in a single graphical interface. For example, you could combine the addresses and photographs of your library branches with a Google map to create a map mash up.

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Microblogging

Blogs that focus on smaller updates. Often facilitated by a social network platform, such as Twitter. Some focus on video or picture updates, while others restrict posts to a certain number of characters.

Online Community

A group of people that interact in an online environment. The people enable the existence of the community by interacting online and, in many cases, creating online norms and rituals for the members.

Online Content

Text, visual or aural content contributed to and available to users via web-based tools.

Open Data

Refers to providing online access to data in a standards-compliant manner.

Online Engagement

Active involvement with content and, in effect, other people in a web-based environment.

Open Government

Set of principles to increase government transparency, accountability, and improve citizen participation. This concept is related to e-Government and Open Data. Calgary and Edmonton have Open Data policies.

Organic Reach

The number of unique people who view your content without paid promotion. The distinction between organic and paid reach is that the former is free.

Posts

A display of content. Content is “posted” in an online environment.

Profile

A representation or description of someone or something in an online environment.

Reach

A data metric that determines the potential size of audience any given message could reach. It does not mean that that entire audience will see your social media post, but rather tells you the maximum amount of people your post could potentially reach. Reach is determined by a fairly complex calculation, that includes number of followers, shares and impressions as well as net follower increase over time.

Response Rate

An engagement metric to assess how much you are interacting with your social media participants. To calculate your response rate, take the number of mentions that you have replied to in a given time period and divide it by the total number of mentions you have received (excluding retweets or shares).

RSS

RSS (Rich Site Summary) is a format for syndicating web content. Bloggers, news publishers, and other content creators use RSS feeds to effectively broadcast content (or content summaries) to audiences. Readers can subscribe to RSS feeds without providing personal information, and then automatically receive updates through a news reader or aggregator.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

Strategies, techniques and tactics to increase the number of visitors to a website by obtaining a high-ranking placement in the results provided by an online search engine.

Sentiment Analysis

An attempt to understand how participants feels about an organization, brand, company, or product based on data collected from social media. It typically involves the use of natural language processing or another computational method to identify the attitude contained in a social media message.

Social Media Marketing

The use of social media by marketers to increase brand awareness, identify key audiences, generate leads, and build meaningful relationships with customers.

Social Media Monitoring

Listening and responding to brand and keyword mentions on social media. Social media monitoring is crucial to social customer service, social selling, social media marketing, and community management.

Social Media Platforms

A type of software or technology that enables users to build, integrate or facilitate community, interaction and user-generated content

Social Media Site

Online service or software platform that focuses on building connections between people who share interest and/or activities. Social media sites provide a user with a profile and means to connect with friends, family, acquaintances, colleagues, organizations, companies and/or institutions.

Social Media ROI

A measurement of the effectiveness of an organization's investment in social media. Like any metric for "return on investment", social media ROI is calculated by dividing the total benefits of an investment by the sum of its costs.

Social Networks

Personal pages that allow users to connect and share content.

Spam

Unnecessary and repetitive social media content that clogs up the feeds of social media users.

Status Updates

A short, text-based entry describing what is real to you. Status updates can reflect feelings, ideas, facts or information.

Symmetrical Connection

A two-way connection between users. That is, for one user to connect with a second, the second user must reciprocate the connection with the first.

Synchronous Communications

Communication that happens in real-time like audio, video, or face-to-face conversations.

Thread

A strand of messages which represent a conversation or part of a conversation.

Timestamp

The date and time that a message is posted to a social network, usually visible below the headline or username. Clicking on a timestamp will usually bring you to the content's permalink.

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Trend or Trending

A topic or hashtag that is popular on social media at a given moment.

Troll

(root: trolling) A person who sows discord on the internet with the deliberate intent of provoking or otherwise disrupting normal on-topic discussion.

URL

The location of a page or other resource on the World Wide Web. The acronym stands for Uniform Resource Locator.

URL Shortener

A tool that condenses a URL into a shorter (and more social media friendly) format, known as a short link. Users who click on a short link are redirected to the original URL.

User-generated Content (UGC)

Media that has been created and published online by the users of a social or collaboration platform, typically for non-commercial purposes. User-generated content is one of the defining characteristics of social media. It is often produced collaboratively and in real-time by multiple users

Viral

The rapid and widespread circulation of Internet content from one user to another.

Web 2.0

Web 1.0 is the online experience where content is pushed out, or broadcast, to users in a one-way communication (the majority of the internet prior to approximately 2004). Web 2.0 engages website visitors in a two-way conversation via opportunities to upload content, publicly respond to posts by website authors, and shape individual user experience through content personalization. Collaboration and interaction are the goals of Web 2.0.

Widget

Small application or code snippet that can be installed on a webpage. Common widgets include Twitter feeds, Facebook Fan boxes, Amazon.com recommendations, real-time weather statistics, and chat boxes. Widgets are also referred to as badges and gadgets.

Web Applications

Any software that runs in a web browser (an online environment).

Wikis

Collaborative content development that allows users to add and edit information. Services include Pbworks, Wikia and Wikipedia.

FACEBOOK:

Facebook

An online social networking site.

Cover Photo

The large, horizontal image at the top of your Facebook profile or page. Similar to a profile photo, a cover photo is public and can be seen by anyone. This is a great place for individuals, brands and organizations to use a unique image to represent who they are, what their business is or what they care about.

Facebook Chat

Real-time chat with other Facebook users.

Facebook Events

The opportunity to create an event by a page or profile. These are typically used for parties, business events, and planned chats.

Facebook Fans

People who like your Facebook Page.

Facebook Group

A space on Facebook where you can communicate and share content within a select group of people. There are three types of groups: public, closed, and secret.

Facebook Messenger

A forum to send private messages to other Facebook users.

Facebook Network

The web of people whom you are friends with on Facebook.

Facebook NewsFeed

The feed that shows new posts from pages and profiles that you've "liked."

Facebook Timeline

A profile that combines a user's Facebook Wall and Profile into one page. It includes reverse-chronological details, by year, of a user's Facebook history with key life points, including birthdays, weddings and other major events.

Facebook Reach

The number of unique people who have seen content from your Facebook Page.

Facebook Share

A button to share the content you enjoy with personal Facebook friends.

Friend

A person that you connect with on Facebook or another social network. Unlike a fan or follower, a friend is a two-way connection; both you and your friend have to endorse the relationship.

Friendship Page

The story of a friendship between two people connected on Facebook. These pages display a variety of content, including photos that both people are tagged in, public messages that they have exchanged, and their mutual friends and interests.

Like

A Facebook invention that's evolved into an understood expression of support for content. Along with shares, comments, and favourites, likes can be tracked as proof of engagement.

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LINKEDIN:

LinkedIn

A business-oriented social networking site mainly used for professional networking.

Connection

The people you invite or those who invite you. When you “accept” to form a connection with someone you form a first level relationship with them in your LinkedIn network.

Degrees

A second degree connection means it is a friend of a friend, you are separated by two degrees. Three degrees away is someone you can read through a friend of a friend and one of their connections.

Endorsement

Recognition of another person’s skill. Endorsements boost your credibility on LinkedIn by indicating that you actually have the skills you say you have. You can only endorse the skills of your first-degree connections.

Inbox

This is where you can check personal messages sent to you by other LinkedIn members.

Introduction

Introductions are requests made to other LinkedIn members that you do not have a direct connection with. It is as it sounds, a way to introduce yourself to someone you do not necessarily know. LinkedIn limits the number of introductions you can have pending at one time.

Invitation

This is what you send when you ask someone to connect with you. You invite them to join your network.

Groups

Public or private forums for users to come together and talk about a specific subject on one page.

Network

Your network is the group of your connections and you are the center of your network. It can also include the connections of your connections.

Profile

This is the page you control. It holds your picture and credentials. You have the ability to post job history and upload a resume. This is what others see when they click on your link.

Recommendation

A written compliment from one of your connections that you can display on your LinkedIn profile to impress hiring managers, potential customers, and that really interesting person you met at TEDxToledo. There’s no limit to how many recommendations you can give or request, but remember that the most authentic recommendations come from people that you’ve actually worked with.

TWITTER:

Twitter

A social network and media platform that enables users to publish 140-character messages along with photos, videos, and other content.

Direct Message (DM)

A private Twitter message sent to one of your followers. Direct messages can only be sent to a Twitter user who is already following you, and you can only receive direct messages from users you follow.

Discover

A feature on the Twitter platform that has five functions: *Tweets*, *Activity*, *Who to Follow*, *Find Friends* and *Popular accounts*.

- The *Tweets option* shows the most popular Tweets across Twitter; some are tailored to you individually and some are globally trending.
- The *Activity tab* shows notable engagements of the people you follow, including the latest Retweets, replies and favourites of your friends.
- *Who to Follow* helps you find new and interesting accounts.
- *Find Friends* allows you to import contacts from your contact book and find them on Twitter.
- *Popular Accounts* provides a list of some engaging and well-liked accounts on Twitter and is delivered to you based on your interests.

Favourite

An indication that someone likes your Tweet, given by clicking the star icon.

Follower

A Twitter user who has subscribed to your Twitter account so they can receive your Tweets in their Home feed. If you want to send them a direct message, you need to follow them back.

Following

The number of accounts that a Twitter handle is following.

Follows

The number of accounts that are following a Twitter handle.

Hashtag

A word or phrase preceded by the “#” sign. #Hashtags are a simple way to mark the topic (or topics) of social media messages and make them discoverable to people with shared interests.

Header Image

The banner image at the top of a user’s Twitter profile.

List

A curated set of Twitter accounts that you can group together in their own timeline. Lists are a convenient way to organize other Twitter users, whether you follow them or not.

Live-tweeting

The same as “live blogging”, but using tweets to tell the story in real-time instead of blog posts.

Mention

The act of tagging another user’s handle or account name in a social media message.

Modified tweet (MT)

Same as a retweet, but with text that’s been slightly changed, hence the word “modified”.

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Mute

A feature available on Twitter that allows you to remove select people from your feed without them ever knowing. They still see that you follow them, and they can still favourite, retweet, and reply to you—you just don't see any of their activity in your timeline. Muting a user is not the same as blocking them.

Reply

A response to someone's Tweet that begins with their @username. Unlike Direct Messages, replies are public.

Retweet (RT)

A Tweet that is re-shared to the followers of another user's Twitter account.

Top Tweets

The most popular and engaging Tweets for a given search query, as determined by a Twitter algorithm.

Tweet

A message that is 140 characters, or less, posted using the social media platform Twitter.

Tweetup

An organized or impromptu gathering of people who use Twitter.

Twitter Feed

The first thing you see when you log in to Twitter. New posts from your followers are placed in your feed.

Unfollow

The action of unsubscribing from another Twitter user's account.

YOUTUBE:

YouTube

A video sharing website.

Avatar

The square image on your channel page that represents your channel across the site.

Bulletin

A message that channel owners can send to their subscribers. Bulletins show up in subscribers' feeds. Channel owners can attach videos to a bulletin.

Channel or Channel Page

([YouTube.com/CHANNELNAME](https://www.youtube.com/CHANNELNAME))

A channel is the public page for a user account on YouTube. It contains uploaded videos, playlists, liked videos, favoured videos, channel comments and general activity. Some creators manage or create content across multiple channels.

Comments

These are written comments on videos, channels, playlists or in response to other comments. Comments may be posted either on the watch page or on a channel page.

Community Actions

Any actions taken by a viewer on or around your channel and content. Includes likes, favourites, subscriptions and comments.

End-card or End-slate

A graphic that creators include at the end of their videos. End-cards typically include specific Calls to Action to subscribe, watch more content, or visit a channel page. They may also contain credits for the video. Generally, end-cards prominently feature annotations.

Favourite(s)

A user action that adds a video to their channel's Favourites playlist. This action can also be broadcast to subscribers.

Feed

A stream of activity either for one channel (via the channel page feed) or for multiple channels (the homepage feed). Feed activities include uploads, updated playlists, video comments, channel comments, new subscriptions, bulletins, likes, favourites and sharing. Users control what feed activities they broadcast and, by subscribing to channels, what feed activities are broadcasted to them in their homepage feed.

Hook

Content that is meant to keep viewers interested in what happens next. Ideally, a video's hook happens within the first 15 seconds.

Hosted Playlist

A collection of videos linked by additional hosted videos. Hosted videos can act as intros, outros and/or interstitials. Hosted videos can contain an actual host (person) or creative branding that acts as a host.

Like(s)

A user action that shows appreciation for a video. This action can be broadcast to subscribers in the feed.

Metadata

The textual information that describes a video, channel or playlist. Video metadata includes title, tags and description. Playlist metadata includes title and description. Channel metadata includes a description.

Optimization

An action that increases the potential success of a video, channel, playlist or content strategy.

Other Channels Module

An optional module that allows the channel owner to feature other channels on their channel page.

Packaging

Graphics and/or content that adds context to a video. Packaging can build your brand, connect your host with the audience, add relevant context to archived content, or add scripted/annotated Calls to Action.

Playlist

A playlist is a collection of videos that can be viewed, shared and embedded like an individual video. You can create playlists using any videos on YouTube. Videos can be in multiple playlists. Uploaded videos and favoured videos are default playlists on your channel.

Pre-buzz

Audience interest in a tent-pole event occurring in the days and weeks leading up to it.

Programming

The practice and strategy of organizing videos, shows or channel content and activity into a daily, weekly or season-long schedule.

Recommendation Activity

A strategy in which a channel likes, favourites or comments on a video in order to promote that video to their subscribers through the feed.

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Series Playlist

A playlist that locks the videos into one specific playlist. Meant for serial or episodic content that follows a narrative story arc, videos included in a series playlist cannot be added to other playlists on the channel.

Share

Ability to distribute videos via social media, email or direct links. This action can be broadcast to subscribers.

Suggested Videos

Video thumbnails that appear in the right-hand column of watch pages and the homepage, or the tiled thumbnails that appear when a video has finished playing.

Subscriber / Subscription

By subscribing to a channel, users will see that channel's activity in their homepage feed. Subscribers can also opt into email communication from subscribed channels on a per-upload and weekly digest basis.

Subscriber Box

See Other Channels Module.

Tags

Words or phrases used to describe the content of your videos. Added to videos at time of upload (see Metadata).

Teaser

A short video that acts as a preview or trailer for longer content. Can be used to promote larger content initiatives or announcements.

Templates

Different pre-set channel designs that can be used to highlight videos, playlists and other channels.

Tent-pole Programming and Publishing

Content creation and publishing strategy that is meant to draft off of the popularity of large cultural events. Programming and publishing tent-pole content is meant to maximize audience.

Thumbnails

The images selected to represent your videos or playlists on the site.

Traffic Source

The referral source of a video view. The page, module or site that drove a viewer to a video.

Vlog

A video-blog. A casual, conversational video format or genre featuring a person talking directly to the camera.

Watch Page

The page where the majority of video viewing happens. URLs with the format [youtube.com/watch?v=\[video ID Here\]](https://youtube.com/watch?v=[video ID Here]) are watch pages.

Watch-time

The amount of time in aggregate that your viewers are watching your videos. Watch-time is estimated in Analytics.

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