

# Social Media Strategy: Politics, Communications and Crisis

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# Introductions

## Alchemy Communications

- Media Relations
- Crisis Communications
- Digital Marketing
  - Social Media
  - White Papers
  - Speaking Opportunities
  - Webinars
- Asset Development
  - Websites, Brochures, Tradeshow Booths

# Should Governments Use Social Media?

## The Case for Social

- Social media lets governments connect and engage with their communities:
  - It allows government agencies to share news and information easily and quickly.
  - Social media can increase transparency and build trust with citizens.
- But social media can also be dangerous:
  - Social media outlets like Twitter have the potential to spread scandals and create PR nightmares.
  - If government agencies aren't careful, social media can hurt the agency's reputation and damage public trust.

Source: [PowerDMS](#)

# Social Media Strategy and Guidelines for Municipal Officials

The public expects personal and timely interactions with government. But when governments use social media to communicate, they often get negative feedback and criticism.

- Personal rules of social media engagement are very different from government use of social media.
- Day to day social media posting is very different from crisis communications.

# Social Media Strategy and Guidelines for Municipal Officials

- Establish Social Media Policies
  - Written guidelines and best practices
  - Documented training for all employees
  - Annual updates on evolving social media trends
  - Internal monitoring that policies are being followed
  - Employees' personal use of social media channels v professional responsibilities
    - Brand Ambassadors
  - How to inform public of approved, monitored social media channels

# Social Media Strategy and Guidelines for Municipal Officials

- What social media TRENDS must municipalities be aware of?
- Which social media TOOLS will help you reach the public more efficiently?
- What TIPS will make your social media management more productive?
- **SOP v CRISIS Communications Strategies**

# Social Media

## Where The Public Lives Online

- 42% of adults get their news through Facebook, versus 20% who rely on traditional media
- Paid versus organic messaging
  - Transparency
  - Trust
- 69% of the public use social media. And 62% of adults get the majority of their news on social media

# Humor Isn't Universal

- The public doesn't know you, they know your position. Your posts represent your position and reflect on you personally
- Emotions run high when discussing political issues





# Mobile-Friendly

## 52.21% of Internet Traffic is Mobile

- Your website and social media should be easily read on smartphones and tablets
- Sites should load quickly so users don't leave



**Mobile Friendly**

# Social Media Strategy Tips

- Less Is More
  - Use 2 or 3 social media platforms really well
- Who is your audience?
  - Create a profile of EACH of public types, for each platform
    - Different people use different social media channels, who are your people?
  - List hashtags and emojis

# Be Clear, Not Clever

- Your role is to inform, not entertain
- Consequences of misunderstood humor or sarcasm
- Not all the public are native English speakers; slang and abbreviations don't always translate

#lol

Laughing Out Loud or Lots of Love



# Rules of Engagement

- Who is listening to and monitoring online chatter?
  - 24/7/365
- Use tools to monitor, people to respond
  - Google Alerts
  - Paid monitoring tools
- Should you block followers?
  - The differences between a spammer, troll and a persistent constituent

# Social Media Response Times

- Respond to all social media posts within 48 hours:
  - Like, Share, Reply
- Review and respond to all negative social media comments within 24 hours:
  - Don't automatically enact a crisis response after a negative post:
    - Analyze the post to be sure you clearly understand the situation
    - Assess each situation individually
  - Appropriate responses include:
    - Invite user to DM and take the conversation off public timeline
    - Pre-approved social media- public reply with link to appropriate document or site that addresses the issue
    - Generic social media- reply saying you will investigate and reply to the sender within 24 hours
    - Pro-active, positive social media posts that address the commenter's issue without a direct Reply to that user

# AI and Social Bots

- #FakeNews
- 48 million Twitter accounts could be bots
- Social bots can attack another user's account to sway public opinion, resulting in an influx of messages or retweets designed to overwhelm or shutdown the account



# Hackers and Security

- Impersonation accounts
- Hijacking your message
- Verify your accounts
- 2-factor authentication
- Password security and sharing
- Use tools to monitor for security and hacking activity



# Social Media Rules of Engagement

**Social media is about building relationships and trust:**

- Social media is personal. People want to talk to people, not brands
- Don't broadcast information, engage in conversations
- People trust other people. Establish a face, voice and personality so people can understand who you are and what you're about
- Social media is all day every day
- Social media doesn't have borders



# Why Social Media Isn't Intuitive

- Users are more savvy
  - High expectations for instant access
  - Low tolerance for fake, inauthentic and untruths
- The public has a short attention span: if you don't respond quickly, they'll broadcast your lack of response

# Social Media Best Practices for Government Municipalities

- Identify where public spends time on social media
  - Facebook
  - **Instagram**
  - Twitter
- Optimize social profiles
  - Add branded header images
  - Identify who is online spokesperson
  - Instruct what to do in case of emergency ICE
  - List other contact channels and website
  - How often channel is monitored

# Social Media Best Practices for Government Municipalities

- Promote social media channels and their purpose
  - Website
  - Business Cards
  - Email signatures
- Clearly identify what type of content is shared
  - Emergency procedures
  - Local news and events
  - Upcoming public meetings

# Social Media Best Practices for Government Municipalities

- Engagement
  - Respond to all posts or explain why not
  - Develop list of approved, standard responses
- Tips
  - Pinned post to feature content
  - On Twitter, if post is too long use multiple posts, marked p1, p2, p3 etc
  - Be clear, not clever

# Social Media Crisis Communications Strategy For Municipal Officials

## **During a crisis, social media is not SOP: Standard Operating Procedures**

- A crisis is anything that significantly disrupts the government or public's typical SOP
  - National disaster or weather
  - Local accident
  - Global issue
  - Inappropriate remark on social media or traditional media
- A communications crisis can be triggered by an event good or bad

# Social Media Best Practices for Government Municipalities

## Crisis Communications:

- What are the top 5 scenarios that are most likely to happen?
- Offend followers?
- Defend against haters?
- Personal beliefs that may not be shared by others?
- Create responses, statements, apologies,

# Social Media Crisis Communications Strategy For Municipal Officials

- Crisis Communications are a preplanned strategy and response to unexpected, non SOP events
  - Broadcast information/response
    - Quickly
    - Accurately
  - Preserve your reputation, be polite!
  - Inform the public
  - Respond to the public

# Social Media Crisis Communications Strategy For Municipal Officials

Educate public ongoing IN ADVANCE of crisis communications procedures are:

- Where to get crisis communications updates
  - Texting message alerts
- What the crisis is
- Where to find accurate, current information
- How to get a response to urgent issues
- When things should return to SOP



# Social Media Crisis Communications Strategy For Municipal Officials

- Social media strategy is integral to any crisis communications plan
  - Build likely scenarios
  - Identify and train spokespeople
    - May be different from SOP social media spokespeople
  - Develop key messages and statements around scenarios
  - Practice
  - Keep the wellbeing of the public first and foremost

# Social Media Crisis Communications Strategy For Municipal Officials

## Messaging Structure

- Crisis social media messaging should follow this format:
  - Context
  - Facts
  - Future

# Social Media Crisis Communications Strategy For Municipal Officials

Build Trust and Transparency:

- If you need to say you are sorry
  - Address situation quickly and directly
  - Gave context, facts and future
  - Accepted responsibility
  - Looked relatable
  - Short and to the point

# Social Media Crisis Communications Strategy For Municipal Officials

- Do
  - Have a plan
    - Respond quickly (ideally within 60 minutes of incident happening)
    - Provide up-to-date information constantly
    - Acknowledge fault when needed
- Don't
  - Pass around blame
  - Respond if you are NOT trained and assigned a role in your crisis communications plan

# More Social Media Strategies and Resources on the Alchemy Blog

<http://www.alchemycommunications.ca/blog/>

# Questions



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