County Communications & Media Relations

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Agenda

County Communication

Traditional Media Relations

Working with Reporters

Message Development

Social Media

County Communication

If you are not defining your reality, then someone else will!

Public Health and COVID-19

Mental Health, Battling the Opioid Crisis and other Addictions

Processing and Funding Medicaid

Promoting Economic Development

Highway Construction and Maintenance

Operating 9-1-1, Jails, Probation, Indigent Defense

Providing Social Services, Senior Services, Veterans Services

Running Parks and Recreation Programs

Administering Early Intervention and Funding Pre-School Education

Property Taxes, Sales Taxes

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Traditional Mass and New (Social) Media

Traditional Mass Media
- Newspapers, Radio and Television

New (Social) Media
- Internet (WWW), Website
- Social Media: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn

Changes in the Way We Communicate

Types of Media
- Controlled media—We have a say in what is said, how, and when.
- Uncontrolled media—We have no direct role in the final content.

Changes brought on by technology
1. Audiences have become more fragmented
2. Audiences are more active, able to choose two-way communication
3. Less competition (and quality) among local reporters
4. There is no single deadline for any outlet.
5. More opportunities for citizen journalists

Traditional Media

Newspapers—Daily, weekly, subscription, free. Despite their decline in numbers, they remain the most influential medium. Reporters under pressure to produce content for multiple channels.

Radio—Talk radio, public radio, other formats with news on the hour.

Television—Local broadcast and cable news. TV offers a window on the world. Reporters under pressure to interview, film and produce content. And post on multiple channels.

What Media Companies Care About

Staying in business, making a profit, making a difference

- Ads and Eyeballs

News: So, what is news?

- What is new? What is Newsworthy?

Media Relations Toolbox

- **Press Release** – hand the story to them, with quotes and photos if possible

- **Media Advisory** – offer an opportunity to learn more, attend a press conference, interview, exclusive offers unique access

- **Press conference/media event**

- **Op-Ed/Letter-to-the-Editor/Editorial Board meeting**

- **Leave-behind-packet** – include all the information you want the media to have – reports, numbers, charts, graphs, etc.

Releases and Advisories

The Hook: What is new? What is newsworthy?
- Email subject, title, introduction
- Advisory: who, what, where, when, how
- Release: Context, quotes, conclusion, close

Tips
- Put the text in the email (do not attach a document).
- Include photos if you have them.
- Post the release on your website and tweet a link to the release
- Follow-up with a phone call

Press conference/Media event/Zoom

Packaging the news for the media outlet.

The Hook
- Community connections

- Do you have video?

- Do you have audio?

Editorials/Op-Eds/Letters

Editorial board meetings – what is new and newsworthy?

A persuasive essay—from your point of view

Letters from county officials and community members

Guidelines for Good Media Relations

Media Relations is about **building relationships**. Get to know the reporters and the media outlets. Where have they worked? Where did they go to school? What beats have they had before?

Maintain a good, up-to-date list of media contact information (include Twitter handles, email addresses). A good list is critical.

Become the **go-to source and expert** on county issues – learn the issues inside and out. If you don't know something, that's ok. Connect the reporter to someone who does know.

Guidelines for Good Media Relations

- Understand Everyone's Objectives

- Shoot Straight

- Give Service

- Do not beg or whine

- Do not ask for "kills"
- Do not flood the media. Remember: What is new? and What is newsworthy?

Message Development

Who is the audience(s)?
- Primary, Secondary, Tertiary

Objective
- What is the message the audience needs to take away?

In one brief paragraph, state the key point or objective in doing the interview or press event.

Facts
- What are three facts or stats for the audience to recall?

Framing the Message

- Make sure that messages understandable, immediately actionable

- Audience members live, work, worship, and play in the framework of social institutions

- People read, watch, listen to communications that have a personal impact

- Media have wide variety of effects—they can unite, divide, fragment

- Previously learned—and accepted--information affects how receptive people are to new messages

Side A and Side B

"If you are not first, you are last"
-- Ricky Bobby, Talladega Nights

Side A: The first thing that an unbiased observer hears is the most credible. And that information gets firmly lodged in the brain.

Side B: New information gets rejected. "It can't be true."

Side A goes first. They define the narrative. They get the prime story location.
Side B is on the defensive, trying to redefine the story, less credible.

The lesson: Define your own reality before someone else defines it. Be Side A.

Getting Around The Media Filter

- Technology makes this easier than ever
- You control your message
- Social media platforms
- Bulk Email

Meeting Citizens Where They Are

- About two-thirds of American adults (68%) say they at least occasionally get news on social media.
- The percentage of Americans who get their news often from television is declining (57 to 49%) from 2016.
- While it is rising for social media (18 to 20%).
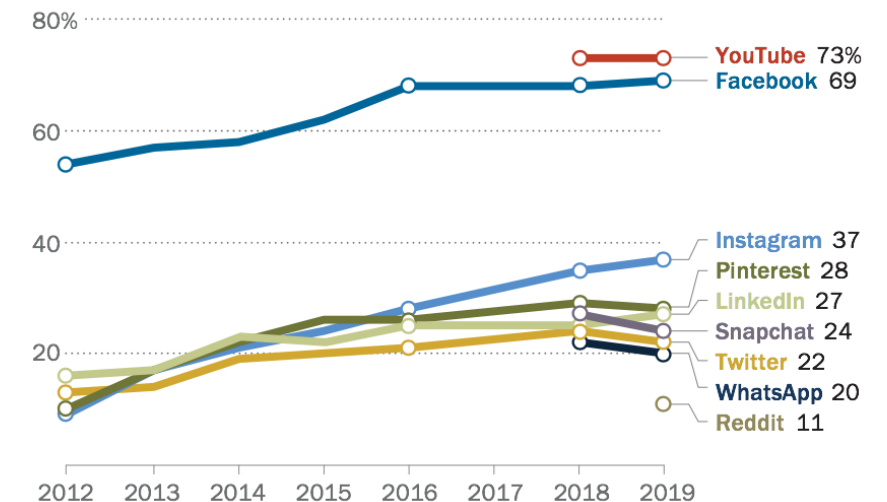- Social media was ranked as people's top choice (34%) for customer care in a study by SproutSocial.
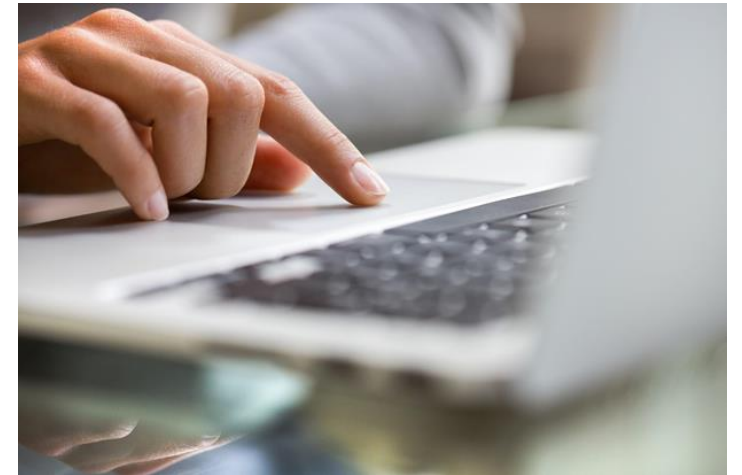
Who's Using Social Media?

Facebook remains the most widely used social media platform by a significant margin:

- Nearly 70% of U.S. adults are now Facebook users.
- Other than the video-sharing platform YouTube, none of the other sites or apps measured in this survey are used by more than 40% of Americans.
- 41% of 65+ year olds use Facebook

Facebook, YouTube continue to be the most widely used online platforms among U.S. adults

% of U.S. adults who say they ever use the following online platforms or messaging apps online or on their cellphone

YouTube 73%
Facebook 69
Instagram 37
Pinterest 28
LinkedIn 27
Snapchat 24
Twitter 22
WhatsApp 20
Reddit 11

Note: Pre-2018 telephone poll data is not available for YouTube, Snapchat and WhatsApp. Comparable trend data is not available for Reddit.
Source: Survey conducted Jan. 8-Feb. 7, 2019.

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Who's Using Social Media?

Young people are on different platforms:

- Some 73% of 18- to 24-year-olds use **Snapchat**.
- Similarly, 75% of Americans in this age group now use **Instagram**
- Close to half of this age group (44%) are **Twitter** users.
- **78% of 18-24-year-olds are Snapchat users**, but that share falls to 47% among those ages 25 to 29.

Use of different online platforms by demographic groups

% of U.S. adults who say they ever use the following online platforms or messaging apps

	YouTube	Facebook	Instagram	Pinterest	LinkedIn	Snapchat	Twitter	WhatsApp	Reddit
U.S. adults	73%	69%	37%	28%	27%	24%	22%	20%	11%
Men	78	63	31	15	29	24	24	21	15
Women	68	75	43	42	24	24	21	19	8
White	71	70	33	33	28	22	21	13	12
Black	77	70	40	27	24	28	24	24	4
Hispanic	78	69	51	22	16	29	25	42	14
Ages 18-29	91	79	67	34	28	62	38	23	22
18-24	90	76	75	38	17	73	44	20	21
25-29	93	84	57	28	44	47	31	28	23
30-49	87	79	47	35	37	25	26	31	14
50-64	70	68	23	27	24	9	17	16	6
65+	38	46	8	15	11	3	7	3	1
<$30,000	68	69	35	18	10	27	20	19	9
$30,000-$74,999	75	72	39	27	26	26	20	16	10
$75,000+	83	74	42	41	49	22	31	25	15
High school or less	64	61	33	19	9	22	13	18	6
Some college	79	75	37	32	26	29	24	14	14
College+	80	74	43	38	51	20	32	28	15
Urban	77	73	46	30	33	29	26	24	11
Suburban	74	69	35	30	30	20	22	19	13
Rural	64	66	21	26	10	20	13	10	8

Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown. Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race.
Source: Survey conducted Jan. 8-Feb. 7, 2019.

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Who's Using Social Media?

Other demographics of note:
- **Pinterest** is significantly more popular with women than with men (42-15%).
- **LinkedIn** is mainly used by college graduates and high-income households
- 51% of Americans with a college degree use LinkedIn, compared with just 9% of those with a high school diploma or less.

Use of different online platforms by demographic groups

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30-49	87	79	47	35	37	25	26	31	14
50-64	70	68	23	27	24	9	17	16	6
65+	38	46	8	15	11	3	7	3	1
<$30,000	68	69	35	18	10	27	20	19	9
$30,000-$74,999	75	72	39	27	26	26	20	16	10
$75,000+	83	74	42	41	49	22	31	25	15
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Who's Using Social Media?

A note on TikTok:
- TikTok is the #1 downloaded app of 2020
- United States represents just 5% of TikTok's global audience
- Just young people? Pretty much.
  - Age 13-17: 27%
  - Age 18-24: 42%
- 35 Percent of Users have participated in a Hashtag Challenge
- More than just dancing – educational videos are gaining share

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Connecting With Your Audience

Goal with social media is to foster of sense of community among followers

- Your audience wants to feel they are being heard
- Engage people on topics that matter to them
- "Go where your citizens are" by listening to their concerns, needs and interest - and contribute where it adds value.
- Engage with commenters when you can
- Post informative and timely content since social users are mainly talking about current events and news.

Facebook

Key Points
- Most ubiquitous platform, *by far* - nearly 70% of U.S. Adults are on Facebook
- Including 65% of ages 50-64, and 40% of 65+
- Powerful live video tools
- Facebook is where you connect with your adult constituents.
- Content turnover is not as fast as Twitter
- A place to tell your county story – photos, videos, press coverage of events/initiatives

Facebook

Best Practices
- Post Daily and use a variety of post types while keeping your audience in mind - what do they want to read and hear about?
- Post time not so critical – the algorithm will surface your post if it receives engagement
- Respond to comments honestly and fairly
- Post video natively – avoid linking to YouTube
- Reply to messages for a personal touch - can set up an instant reply
- More best practices for government: https://www.facebook.com/gpa

Facebook

Facebook Live

- Become a trusted source of the latest information
- Briefings, Town Halls, Press Conferences, Events
- Write talking points, not a script – authenticity is a plus
- Promote upcoming live events across all social media platforms, multiple times
- For more best practices on conducting Facebook Live events watch our webinar on this subject – **Effectively Communicating with Your Community Through Facebook Live and Virtual Town Halls** - on our YouTube channel in our Webinars playlist.

Twitter

Key Points
- 83% of journalists use Twitter
- U.S. based Twitter users are younger, wealthier and more highly educated than the general population.
- Twitter is where the *elites* are – reporters, politicians, organizations
- Twitter is where you go to influence the conversation
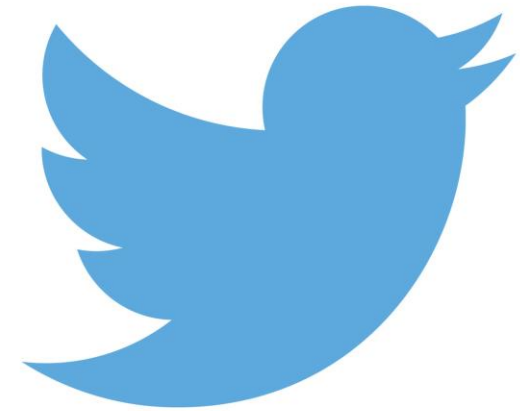
Twitter

Best Practices
- Do not use abbreviations and slang such "2" for "to" or "r" for are, especially with the increased character count
- Spell out acronyms to provide context
- Should thank someone for retweeting your tweet, especially if they are an influencer
- Post video natively – 2:20 time limit
- Use hashtags only when there is a topic you feel others will likely use
- Measure your success - chart follower growth and impressions

Twitter

Hashtags - What are they and why to use them
- Hashtags are way to connect social media content to a specific topic, event, theme or conversation
- They also make it easier to discover posts around those specific topics, because hashtags aggregate all social media content with that same hashtag
- #COVID-19
- #StateoftheState

Twitter

Hashtags
- **They always start with #** but they won't work if you use spaces, punctuation or symbols
- **Don't string too many words together.** The best hashtags tend to be relatively short and easy to remember
- **Use relevant and specific hashtags.** If it is too obscure, it will be hard to find and it won't likely be used by other social media users
- **Limit the number of hashtags you use.** More isn't always better. Can look spammy

Twitter

Fleets

- New Feature – launched November 17th
- Disappear after 24hrs
- Like Instagram "Stories" for Twitter
- Can share text, images, video or regular tweets
- 1080x1920 image size

Metadata

- How your tweet or post looks when sharing a link
- Title, description, and image
- Tweets with image links get 2x the engagement rate of those without
- "Good meta" →

Metadata

- "Bad meta" →
- Talk to your offices' webmaster about configuring your meta by using the Twitter and Facebook API.
- We can provide the links from Twitter and FB to help set up your meta.

Metadata

Preview Links
- Use Twitter Card Validator and Facebook debugger so that the platforms can "scrape" the metadata before it's posted.
- Twitter https://cards-dev.twitter.com/validator
- Facebook https://developers.facebook.com/tools/debug/

Card preview

Metadata

Sizes.
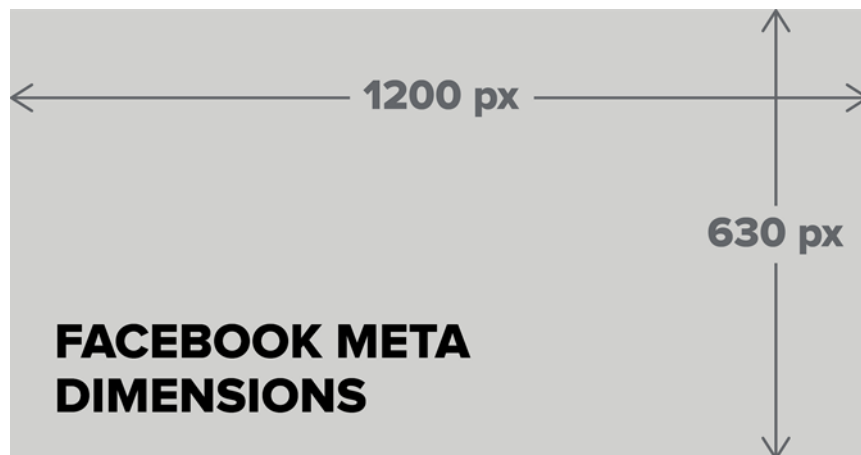
Metadata

Metadata - Twitter Cards

Create your own cards
- Twitter Ads – ads.twitter.com
- Enter a credit card

Metadata - Twitter Cards

Create your own cards
- Add image, headline, and URL link.

Metadata - Twitter Cards

Instagram

Best Practices
- Should be used to foster a more personal user experience with government
- Best type of content is behind-the-scenes look at your office, and is always visually compelling
- Caption should work with the photo to tell the story
- Facebook's Instagram guide for Government: https://www.dropbox.com/s/89qu8p2hco0fo2t/Facebook%27s%20Instagram%20Best%20Practices%2002%2002%2018_guide_international.pdf?dl=0

Instagram

Instagram Stories
Do's:
- Think about the narrative structure of your Story: It should have a point and feel complete, not random
- Use Instagram Story's built-in tools, fonts, emojis, Gifs, etc (IG Stories can be more playful than other platforms)
- Save good and/or evergreen Stories to your profile
- Link your Instagram account with your Facebook account, and set it up so Instagram Stories appear as FB Stories
- Use a mix of still and videos (including audio!)

Instagram

Instagram Stories
Dont's:
- Don't overpost. If your Instagram story looks like this….

  —

  ….then it's too long! Keep it below 10 slides if possible.
- Put too much text on one slide. Viewers only have 15 seconds to read it, so make it easy for them.
- Don't put text too close to the edges — Instagram has their own built-in text there that will obscure your text

Emergency Protocol

- Avoid posting messages that are not related to the emergency during this time.
- Do not use inappropriate tone, humor, sarcasm, jokes, ALL CAPITALS, and exclamation points (!). All messages should be communicated in a calm, authoritative, professional and respectful manner.
- Do not post tweets, updates, links or re-tweets with information from any non-governmental, unofficial source: media, commercial, individuals, etc.
- Do not use jargon and acronyms when possible.
- Review scheduled tweets/posts and possibly remove if not relevant to the emergency

YouTube

Best Practices
- Use keywords in your title - words that users search when looking for information related to your video.
- Always add a description with keywords.
- Include tags for every keyword, location, audience. The more tags you use, the more likely someone will find your video.
- Choose the best thumbnail - pick one of YouTube's options or upload your own.
- Create playlists based on themes your office develops.

Bulk Email

Best Practices

- If possible, build list with a splash page
- Cross-promote signups
- For non-newsletter emails: One email, one thought, one action
- Avoid overly complex sentences and jargon, don't assume that your readers are familiar with the subject matter
- Always try to include a "Call to Action" or further steps your readers can take
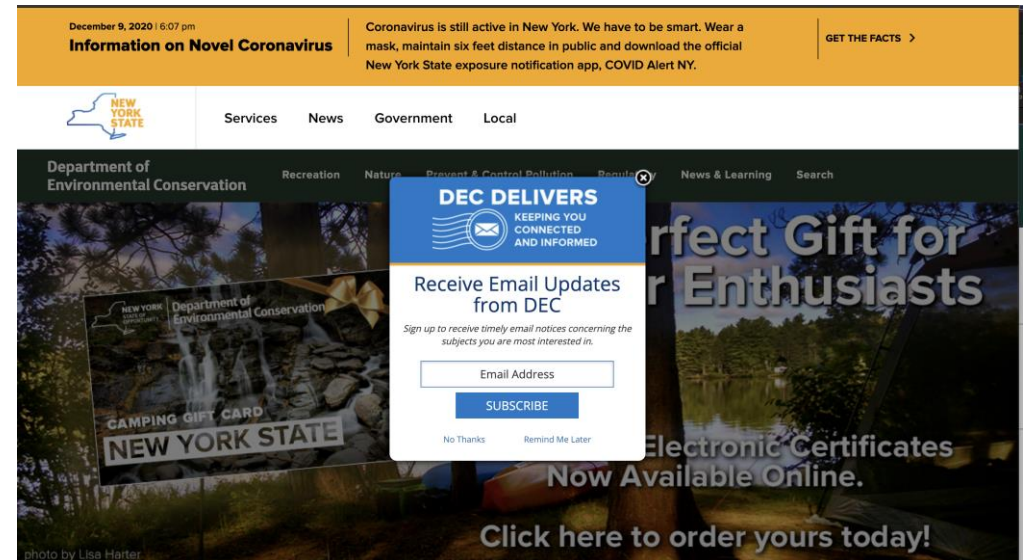
CTA Email Template

Dear [firstname]/County Resident,

[Brief, one line hook sentence. No link here].

["A section." 2-3 sentences on the news. Include word "you" in at least the first part of it, and directly say how it relates to the recipient. 100 words maximum. No links here].

Bold, underline and link a sentence of call to action here.

["B Section" 2-3 sentences directly saying why the above is important to a larger effort, what it means, and how the County is helping drive it. 1 link optional here].

Rephrase and repeat the first ask;

[1 or 2 supporting sentences to wrap up].

[Signoff],
[Signer that matches the Sender]

[Optional – use if only 1 link in body:]
PS: Did you know that [final call to action]? Learn more here.

Q&A^{SM}

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