

The PIO's Ultimate Guide to Social Media

How to Leverage Social Media to
Increase Citizen Engagement in
Your Community

 CIVICPLUS®





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Meet Melissa



Melissa is an average, middle-aged mom, living in a small town in Indiana. She is married with two boys, ages 15 and 12, and works as a registered nurse at a local physician's office. On an average Friday morning, Melissa's day looks something like this:

Melissa wakes up around 6 a.m. After making sure her sons are also awake and getting ready for school, she stands at her coffee pot, iPhone® in hand, waiting for the coffee to brew. She scrolls through her emails, checking for anything important. Bored after a few seconds of scrolling, she opens the Facebook app on her iPhone and spends the next five minutes scrolling through her Facebook News feed while she sips her coffee. She clicks to like a recent photo of her nephew playing soccer, wishes a co-worker a happy birthday, watches a video of a cute puppy falling asleep in his kibble, and noticing that two friends have liked one of her

favorite makeup brands, she likes the makeup brand's Facebook page too.

On her lunch break at work she scrolls through Pinterest, searching for inspiration for a living room re-decoration project she has in mind. She pins some photos of plush couches, modern television stands, cheerful paint color combinations, and a DIY shelving solution to her "Living Room Ideas" board and makes a note to stop by the hardware store over the weekend to pick-up paint swatches.

As she finishes lunch she receives an alert on her iPhone from LinkedIn. Opening it, she sees it's a message from a former co-worker with a link to a job opening at the local hospital. The message says, "Saw this and thought of you. :)" Melissa puts her iPhone away, excited to look at the job opening more closely later at home.

MEET MELISSA



The last patient Melissa sees in the afternoon is one of her favorites; a funny, 20-year old woman who always chats with Melissa about the shows she watches on Netflix, filling Melissa in on her favorite plot lines. Before she leaves, the patient uses her Android™ smartphone to show Melissa photos of her two cats that she recently shared on Instagram.

After dinner, Melissa sits on the living room couch with her laptop. Her 15-year old son is sitting on the floor watching YouTube videos on his iPhone with his headphones on. Her 12-year old is up in his room playing Minecraft on his computer. Her husband sits next to her, watching college football on TV and scrolling through his Twitter feed on his tablet to see what the media and other followers are tweeting real-time about the game.

Melissa opens the job posting link her former co-worker sent her earlier that day, and starts working on submitting an online application. She creates a resume and cover letter and completes the entire application through LinkedIn.

It's nearly eleven o'clock by the time Melissa gets into bed. Before turning off the light, she spends another 15 minutes scrolling through Facebook. She likes six of her friends' photos, watches a video of a high school gymnast about which several of her friends shared and commented, and likes a sponsored Starbucks post celebrating the return of the Pumpkin Spice Latte.

MEET MELISSA



Melissa is an average American working mom in an average American town. She is a voter, a taxpayer, and a concerned citizen. She is loyal to her family and friends, and loyal to her hometown. Melissa is not dissimilar from many of your own citizens and voters.

Melissa and her family interacted with six different social media sites, using five different devices on this average Friday. Melissa used social media to keep in touch with friends and family, to receive direct messages, to apply for a job, to research a home improvement project, and to consume entertaining content.

On this particular Friday, Melissa did not read or write a letter, watch network television, buy a magazine, or read a newspaper.

Melissa is an average American in an average town and one of the best ways for friends, family, brands, and her local government leaders to reach her, is through social media.

At CivicPlus, we partner with over 2,500 local governments to build digital solutions to help them connect, and engage with citizens in their communities. We have built this guide to share best practices with public information officers (PIO) and other communications managers based on our experiences working with local leaders.

THE PIO'S ULTIMATE GUIDE TO SOCIAL MEDIA



This guide will teach you how to leverage the power of social media to connect with citizens like Melissa in your community. We'll teach you:

- What social networks your citizens use most frequently
.....
- When, where, and how they use each social network
.....
- The unique ways your local government can leverage a variety of social networks to connect with citizens
.....
- How to leverage social media during election season
.....
- How social media can be an effective tool to connect with citizens in times of natural disaster or local emergency
.....
- Tips for managing social media damage control
.....
- How to Implement a social media campaign
.....
- Best practices for using social media
.....

If you're ready to start leveraging the power of social media to connect with citizens in your community, #ReadOn.

The Proliferation of Social Media Among Citizens

THE PROLIFERATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA AMONG CITIZENS

Over the past decade, social media has redefined how we communicate with one another, how we share information, how we consume information, and how we interact with brands, institutions, and our community. Consider these staggering social media facts:

- There are 7.3 billion people in the world, and 2.3 billion active social media users.¹
- The total number of social media users in the world has increased by 176 million in the past year alone.
- The typical Internet user has an average of 5.54 social media accounts.
- In the United States, 56 percent of Americans 12 years old and older have a profile on a social networking site.²

What these statistics tell us, is that social media use is growing globally and locally, and it's only going to continue to grow. That means that no matter where your community is located, whether you are in a metro or rural area, and have millions of citizens or hundreds, your citizens are using social networks. In fact, according to the Pew Research Center, 58 percent of rural residents, 68 percent of suburban residents, and 64 percent of urban residents all use social media.³

¹ Brandwatch, "Marketing: 96 Amazing Social Media Statistics and Facts for 2016." <https://www.brandwatch.com/2016/03/96-amazing-social-media-statistics-and-facts-for-2016/>

² Convince and Convert. "11 Shocking New Social Media Statistics in America." <http://www.convinceandconvert.com/social-media-research/11-shocking-new-social-media-statistics-in-america/>

³ Pew Research Center, "Social Media Usage: 2005-2015," <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/10/08/social-networking-usage-2005-2015/>



Your Social Citizens

YOUR SOCIAL CITIZENS

Working mom Melissa, whom we described in the introduction to this eBook, is an example of an average citizen who utilizes social media, but middle-aged moms are by no means the only citizens tweeting, posting, and sharing.

CONSIDER THESE FACTS:

- **Gender Equality.** Today, 68 percent of all women use social media, compared with 62 percent of all men.
- **Social Seniors.** Usage among citizens 65 years old and older has more than tripled since 2010 when only 11 percent used social media. Today, 35 percent of all those 65 years old and older report using social media.⁴
- **Socio-Eco-Factors.** Social media is no longer only used by those in higher-income households. 56 percent of citizens living in the lowest income households now use social media.

⁴Pew Research Center, "Social Media Usage: 2005-2015," <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/10/08/social-networking-usage-2005-2015/>

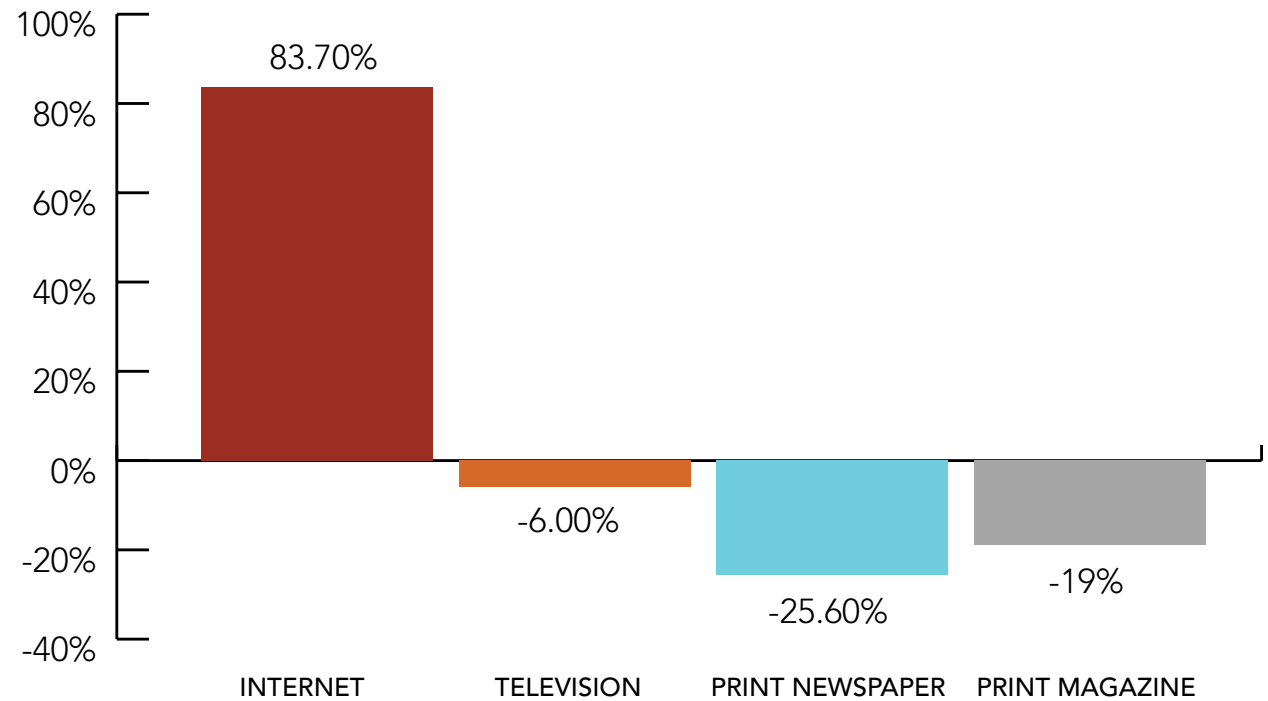
⁵Statista, "The Internet is Gradually Replacing Traditional Media," <https://www.statista.com/chart/3519/media-consumption/>

While citizens are spending more time utilizing social media, their consumption of other forms of traditional media is declining. According to a 2015 study performed by ZenithOptimedia, between 2010 and 2014, citizens replaced a significant amount of time they previously spent consuming traditional media, with time spent online.⁵



Change in Time Consumers Spend with Selected Media
Per Day Between 2010 and 2014

YOUR SOCIAL CITIZENS



For local governments that have primarily focused their citizen communication strategies around distributing press releases to traditional

media outlets, we now know there are more direct, and more impactful ways to communicate with citizens—primarily, through social media.



Mobile Optimization

MOBILE OPTIMIZATION



[Learn how communication managers can benefit from mobile access to their CMS too.](#)

While many citizens update their Facebook profile or scroll through Tweets from a desktop computer, a significant amount of social media use is performed on [smartphones and tablets](#).

There were 1.71 billion monthly active social media users in the world as of July 2016, and 823 million of them only utilize social media from a mobile device, such as a smart phone or tablet.⁶

Mobile social media use is only expected to grow. In fact, one million new active mobile social media users are added to the social sphere every day, the equivalent of one every 12 seconds.⁷

Social media use accounts for a significant amount of the time Americans spend on their mobile devices. 22 percent of the Internet time Americans spend on mobile devices is spent on Facebook alone.⁸ When it comes to YouTube, another incredibly popular social media platform among citizens, more than half of the video views performed on YouTube are accessed on a mobile device. Again, citizens' time consuming mobile social media is replacing time spent with traditional media. On mobile devices alone, YouTube reaches more 18 to 49-year-olds than any broadcast or cable television network.⁹

[Click here for new information on why Congress says your municipal website must be mobile responsive.](#)

⁶Brandwatch, "Marketing: 47 Facebook Statistics for 2016." <https://www.brandwatch.com/2016/05/47-facebook-statistics-2016/>

⁷Brandwatch, "Marketing: 96 Amazing Social Media Statistics and Facts for 2016." <https://www.brandwatch.com/2016/03/96-amazing-social-media-statistics-and-facts-for-2016/>

⁸Brandwatch, "Marketing: 47 Facebook Statistics for 2016." <https://www.brandwatch.com/2016/05/47-facebook-statistics-2016/>

⁹Brandwatch, "36 Fascinating YouTube Statistics for 2016." <https://www.brandwatch.com/2016/06/36-youtube-stats-2016/>

News Consumption on Social Media

NEWS CONSUMPTION ON SOCIAL MEDIA



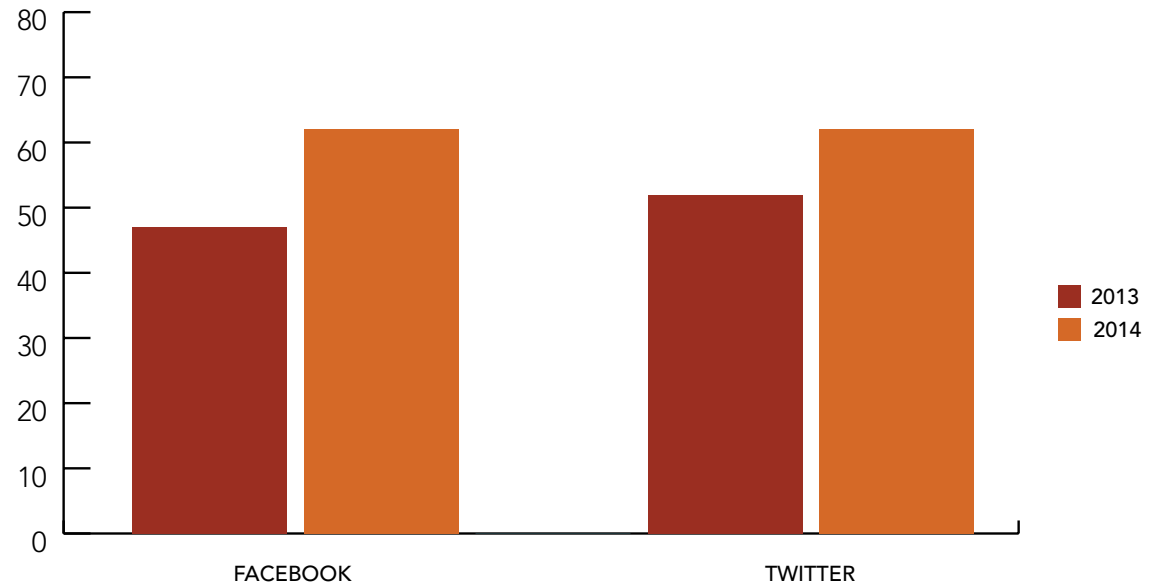
Clearly, social media has become the new normal communication channel for adults of all ages. That being said, what types of content are people sharing and consuming? Certainly, not everyone is posting photos of their meatless lunch salad, Instagramming photos of themselves at the gym, or tweeting about celebrity gossip. While there is plenty of this type of content floating around the twitterverse, many Americans are using social media as a source of news.

According to a study performed by the Pew Research Center, use of both Facebook and Twitter as a source of news is on the rise, as Americans are actively seeking information about local and national news from these social platforms. In 2014, 63 percent of Twitter users and 63 percent of Facebook users both reported that the platforms serve as a source for news about events and issues that impact their lives, percentages that had increased from the year prior.¹⁰

¹⁰The Verge, "Facebook's New Stats: 1.32 Billion Users, 30 Percent Only Use it On Their Phone." <http://www.theverge.com/2014/7/23/5930743/facebook-new-stats-1-32-billion-users-per-month-30-percent-only-use-it-on-their-phones>

Percent of Facebook and Twitter Users Who Report the Platforms are a Good Source of News

NEWS CONSUMPTION ON SOCIAL MEDIA



According to the Pew Research study, citizens who seek news on Facebook and Twitter use the platform to learn about a wide variety of global, national, local, and hyperlocal topics, including:

- National government and politics
- International affairs
- Business
- Sports
- Entertainment
- People and events in their communities
- Local government
- Local weather
- Traffic
- Crime
- Science and technology
- Health and medicine

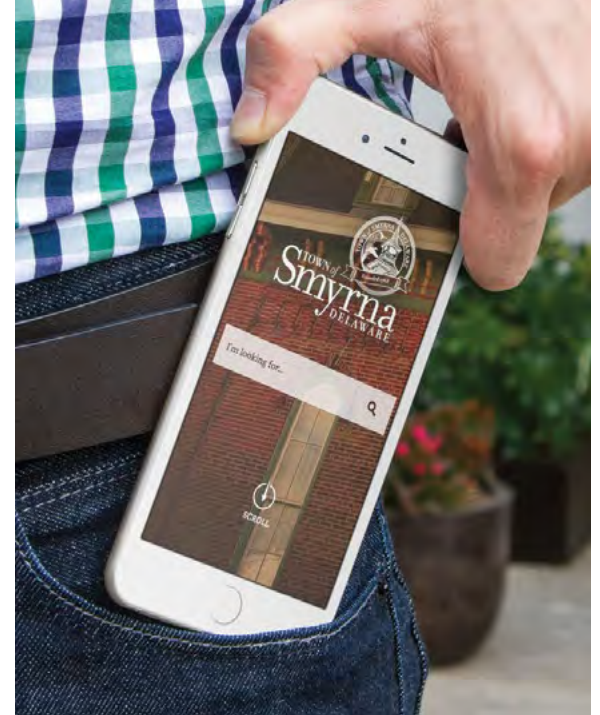
Social Media in the Public Sector

SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

The trend of Americans using social media to learn about news, share information, and comment on topics, trends, and stories that impact their community, is changing how citizens take part in the democratic process, as an increasing number of citizens are using social media as a platform to engage in social and political dialogue.

ACCORDING TO THE PEW RESEARCH STUDY:

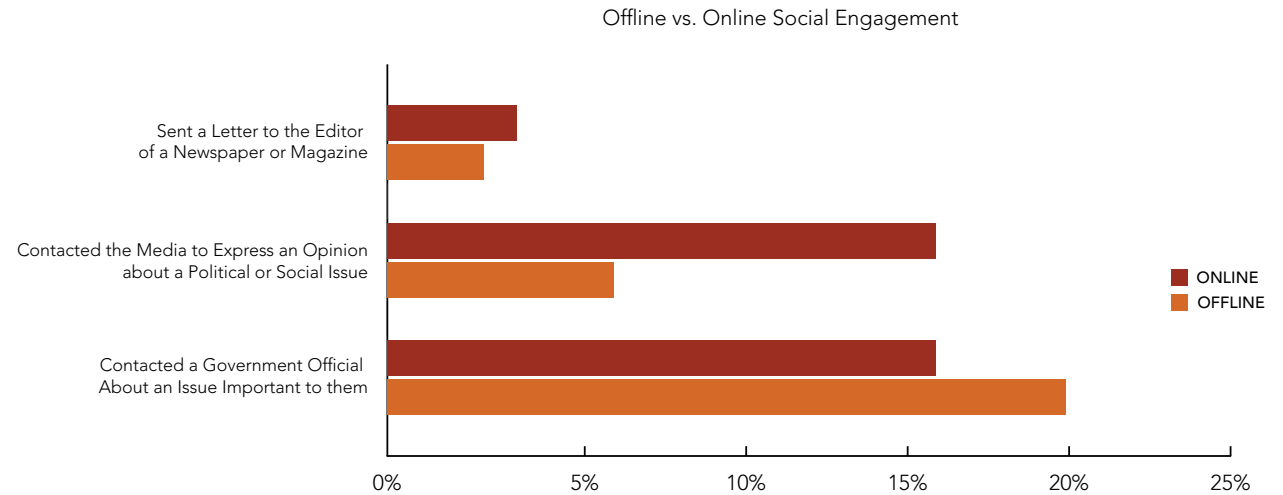
- Facebook users are more likely than Twitter users to post and respond to government content, while Twitter users are more likely to follow news organizations.
- 32% of Facebook users report that they post about government and politics, while 28% comment on such posts by others.
- 25% of Twitter users tweet about government and politics while 13% reply to tweets on such topics posted by others.



In addition, 39 percent of American adults are participating in political or civic activities on social networking sites, and many Americans are engaging with their local governments online, in many cases, more frequently than with traditional, non-digital forms.¹¹

¹¹Pew Research Center, "Civic Engagement in the Digital Age," <http://www.pewinternet.org/2013/04/25/civic-engagement-in-the-digital-age>

SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR



The Pew Research Center also discovered that citizens are being encouraged to learn about political issues and topics that impact their communities based on information they are first exposed to on social media. This is especially true of younger social networking site users as well as those with a college degree. The researchers' data found that:

- 43% of social networking site users say they have decided to learn more about a political or social issue because of something they read on a social networking site.
- 18% of social networking site users say they have decided to take action involving a political or social issue because of something they read on a social networking site.

Social Media in Election Season

SOCIAL MEDIA IN ELECTION SEASON

Nothing gets citizens talking, sharing, commenting, and engaged in the leadership of their community like an election. Not surprisingly, given the power of social media to stimulate dialogue, distribute news, and share information, social media has the power to be an impactful tool during election season.

According to recent data, 39 percent of American adults have used social media to engage in at least one of eight civic or political activities.¹² Consider these facts about social media users:

- 38% have used the platforms to “like” or promote material related to politics or social issues that others have posted.
- 35% have used the platforms to encourage people to vote.

- 34% have used the platforms to post their own thoughts or comments on political and social issues.
- 33% have used the platforms to repost content related to political or social issues that was originally posted by someone else.
- 31% have used the platforms to encourage other people to take action on a political or social issue that is important to them.
- 28% have used the platforms to post links to political stories or articles for others to read.
- 21% belong to a group on a social networking site that is involved in political or social issues, or that is working to advance a cause.
- 20% have used the tools to follow elected officials and candidates for office.

[Remember that your civic website should be optimized for election day too. Click here for tips and best practices.](#)

¹² Pew Research Center, “Social Media and Political Engagement,” <http://www.pewinternet.org/2012/10/19/social-media-and-political-engagement/>

Leveraging Social Media Platforms for Local Government

LEVERAGING SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT



Just as every community is unique, every civic engagement strategy is unique. To determine how best to leverage social media to accomplish your civic communication goals, start by understanding the value proposition of each of the most prominent social media networks.

What follows is a summary of each of the most popular social networks relevant to local governments, an explanation of who is using them, tips for how your community may be able to leverage each to accomplish its goals, and some examples of best practices from other local communities.



Facebook

FACEBOOK

Usage:

1.71 billion users.¹³

Purpose:

To give people the power to share, to stay connected with friends and family, to discover what's going on in the world, and to express what matters to them.

Benefit to Local Government:

Facebook can help local governments build stronger communities and social connections to its citizens by sharing local news.

Worldwide, 38.6 percent of the online population uses [Facebook](#), and its usage continues to grow. Facebook adds 500,000 new users every day, the equivalent of 6 new profiles every second. Potentially the most impactful social network used by your citizens, Facebook users spend an average of 20 minutes per day on the social networking site. That means Facebook is a tool that can be leveraged to share relevant, in-depth, community content, such as community events, news articles, photos, and breaking news or local alerts.

Over the past decade, social media platforms have come and gone. Remember MySpace? Foursquare? Meerkat? Facebook, however, has been successful in staying relevant and appealing to multiple generations by evolving its offering as technology and social demands

have changed. One way that Facebook has evolved is by allowing users to post and share videos.

[Video](#) has been proven to be one of the most effective ways to engage on social media. If a photo is more likely to gain attention than text alone, video is that much more likely to gain attention over a photo. Facebook now sees 8 billion average daily video views from 500 million users.

Local governments can leverage the impact of video on social media by sharing videos of community events on Facebook. Share videos of holiday parades, the development of new buildings, political interviews, or film your own news-style features to educate citizens about issues impacting your community.

¹³Brandwatch, "Marketing: 96 Amazing Social Media Statistics and Facts for 2016." <https://www.brandwatch.com/2016/03/96-amazing-social-media-statistics-and-facts-for-2016/>

FACEBOOK



For example, the City of Anaheim, California shares videos of recent community news on its Facebook page. Short, informational videos have been an effective tool for the large city to generate awareness and share news about local community initiatives and administrative accomplishments.

FACEBOOK LIVE

Facebook’s latest video evolution is the addition of live video to its platform. While this tool is being embraced by brands, teens, entrepreneurs, and everyone in between, live video functionality has the capability to be particularly effective for local governments looking to connect with their citizen followers. With this new tool, page administrators can

broadcast up to 60 minutes of live video which can be seen, and watched by their followers. Throughout the video, followers can “like” what they see, or replay with comments, which gives page administrators immediate and ongoing feedback while they broadcast.

Imagine sharing live video of press conferences, community events such as parades, public concerts, town hall lectures, public forums, or free educational sessions. You may be able to capture the virtual attendance of citizens at events in which they may not otherwise participate. Facebook Live allows you to amplify the reach of your community event and capture the attention of citizens in a way that enables a form of two-way dialogue—something that is essential to engagement.



Twitter

TWITTER

Usage:
320 million users.¹⁴

Purpose:
Twitter is a microblogging platform. It allows users to post and share short messages that are limited to 140 characters. These messages, called “tweets” can include links to external content or photos, and can incorporate hashtags (#) for users to find tweets on related, trending topics.

Benefit to Local Government:
To share immediate community news and gauge citizen reaction and feedback.

Those who typically engage with [Twitter](#) are most likely to use the platform to comment on, or react to, breaking news. For this reason, Twitter serves as a sort of echo chamber, meaning that when news breaks, whether it be local news, national news, industry specific news, or news related to sports or entertainment, a user’s Twitter stream is likely to include a long list of tweets from users all of which are sharing, or reacting to, the same news story.

Not surprisingly, social media users find Twitter to be a better platform to engage with breaking news content specifically compared to Facebook. 59 percent of social media users report that they follow breaking news on Twitter, while comparatively, only 31 percent report following breaking news on Facebook. This

data supports the theory that Twitter’s strength lies in providing as-it-happens coverage and commentary on live community events.

Twitter’s echo chamber phenomenon, coupled with the fact that the majority of tweets are issued by a small number of tweeters, has resulted in the social media service falling out of favor with younger generations, and those looking for more diverse content. Still, Twitter serves as an excellent platform for local governments looking to share news and information that impacts their communities when implemented as part of a comprehensive communication strategy.

Twitter is also valuable to brands and institutions for its ability to allow direct response to user

¹⁴Brandwatch, “Marketing: 96 Amazing Social Media Statistics and Facts for 2016.” <https://www.brandwatch.com/2016/03/96-amazing-social-media-statistics-and-facts-for-2016/>

TWITTER



feedback, questions, and comments. 77 percent of Twitter users feel more positive about a brand when they tweet at that brand and receive a response.¹⁵ When Twitter users mention their community and civic leadership, your local administration has a direct opportunity to engage with that Twitter citizen, helping to not only strengthen an individual citizen's

appreciation for their civic leaders, but to simultaneously improve the perception of all those Twitter users who witness the response and interaction.

Athens-Clarke County leverages its official Twitter accounts as an additional channel to share important community news and updates.

¹⁵Brandwatch, "Marketing: 96 Amazing Social Media Statistics and Facts for 2016." <https://www.brandwatch.com/2016/03/96-amazing-social-media-statistics-and-facts-for-2016/>

TWITTER



The Town of Banff in Canada also uses its Twitter account to share news. It adds popular local hashtags and links to additional content available on its website to maximize the reach of its messages. In the example depicted above, during the first major snow storm of the season, the administrators in Banff included a link to their civic website's available traffic cameras to prepare citizens for dangerous road conditions.

If you are going to use Twitter as part of your local government communication strategy, be active. Post frequently as you create and share news content on your civic website. Add hashtags and retweet relevant news and information from other regional news sources, and engage with citizens by responding to their direct tweets.

[Click here to learn how to master the #hashtag.](#)



YouTube

YOUTUBE

Usage:

1 billion+ users¹⁶

Purpose:

YouTube serves to allow individuals to discover, watch, and share originally-created videos, serving as a forum for people to connect, inform, and inspire one another.

Benefit to Local Government:

Connect with citizens through video, the most engaging form of social content.

¹⁶Brandwatch, "Marketing: 96 Amazing Social Media Statistics and Facts for 2016." <https://www.brandwatch.com/2016/03/96-amazing-social-media-statistics-and-facts-for-2016/>

¹⁷Brandwatch, "Marketing: 96 Amazing Social Media Statistics and Facts for 2016." <https://www.brandwatch.com/2016/03/96-amazing-social-media-statistics-and-facts-for-2016/>

¹⁸Brandwatch, "36 Fascinating YouTube Statistics for 2016." <https://www.brandwatch.com/2016/06/36-youtube-stats-2016/>

According to Brandwatch, an astonishing 300 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube every minute¹⁷ and more than 3.25 billion hours of video are watched on YouTube each month. These staggering numbers prove one thing: the power that video has to engage, and capture.

YouTube, owned by search goliath Google, is also the world's second largest search engine and third most visited site after Google and Facebook. This means that YouTube serves as a starting place for citizens searching for content, news, and information.

STEALING TIME FROM CABLE

YouTube has become such a well-adapted video sharing service that it is starting to steal market

share from cable television. Six out of 10 people today prefer online video platforms to live TV,¹⁸ and it's estimated that by 2025, half of viewers under 32 will no longer subscribe to a paid television service. For local government, this means that the number of citizens exposed to news content and advertising on cable television is dropping, being replaced by content produced and shared by brands, organizations, individuals, and media companies directly on YouTube.

Not just a social media site utilized by teens and tweens, this shift to YouTube also impacts citizen voters. In 2015, 18 to 49-year-olds spent 4 percent less time watching television while their time on YouTube increased by 74 percent.

YOUTUBE



WHERE CITIZENS ARE WATCHING

An important distinction to be made about YouTube is in where and how citizens are watching content. More than half of YouTube views come from mobile devices. Following the trend of social media being consumed on mobile, YouTube is a popular platform for individuals on the go.

CREATE YOUR OWN STORY

Many local governments have adopted YouTube as a means to create their own local news stories in light of reduced press coverage by local and regional news outlets. This has been an especially successful strategy for

local governments finding that press releases issued to local media are being picked-up less frequently. Suffering from an inability to obtain historical levels of news coverage, innovative communities have turned to YouTube to create, share, and promote their own news content.

For example, The City of Beaverton, Oregon has created a successful YouTube channel that it uses to share videos of town hall meetings, self-produced news stories, and other public service announcements. Its 30-second video, “Five Features of the Beaverton Public Safety Center,” for example, has been viewed nearly 83,000 times. It includes a link to more information at the City’s civic website.

YOUTUBE



The City of Brea, California also uses YouTube to promote news and local information, as well as promote community events. The image above is from its self-produced “I Love Brea” video, which promoted the City’s first ever city-wide

service day. Such content limits PIOs’ reliance upon the coverage of local media to share important community news with citizens and engage the community on projects that make an impact.



LinkedIn

LINKEDIN

Usage: 467 million users.¹⁹

Purpose: Connecting the world's professionals to make them more productive and successful.

Benefit to Local Government:
Talent acquisition.

LinkedIn is the social network for business professionals looking to connect and network with other professionals, and discuss relevant industry topics. LinkedIn is also a job search tool, making it invaluable for both active and passive job seekers, as well as human resource managers, headhunters, and recruiters.

¹⁹LinkedIn, <https://press.linkedin.com/about-linkedin>

²⁰DMR, "LinkedIn Job Statistics," <http://expandedramblings.com/index.php/linkedin-job-statistics/>

Compared to other social media platforms, particularly Facebook and Twitter, LinkedIn is the most highly utilized social media platform for job seekers. There are almost 6 times as many job views on LinkedIn as on Facebook, and three times more LinkedIn job views than on Twitter.²⁰

Whether your local community is home to 1 million citizens, or 1,000, LinkedIn can be an effective way to identify, recruit, and hire talent for your local administration. Consider these talent acquisition statistics provided by LinkedIn researchers:

- The top channels people use to look for new jobs are online job boards (60%), social professional networks (56%), and word of mouth (50%).

- The number one way people discover a new job is through a referral.
- Companies can expand their talent pool by 10x by recruiting through their employees' networks.
- The most effective talent branding tools are company websites (68%), online professional networks (e.g., LinkedIn), and social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter).
- Over 75% of people who recently changed jobs used LinkedIn to inform their career decision.
- New employees sourced through LinkedIn are 40% less likely to leave the company within the first 6 months.
- LinkedIn-influenced hires are 2x more likely to be high demand and above average hires.

LINKEDIN

Professionals are signing up to join LinkedIn at a rate of more than two new members per second. Its fastest growing demographic includes students and recent college graduates, of which, there are currently 40 million.

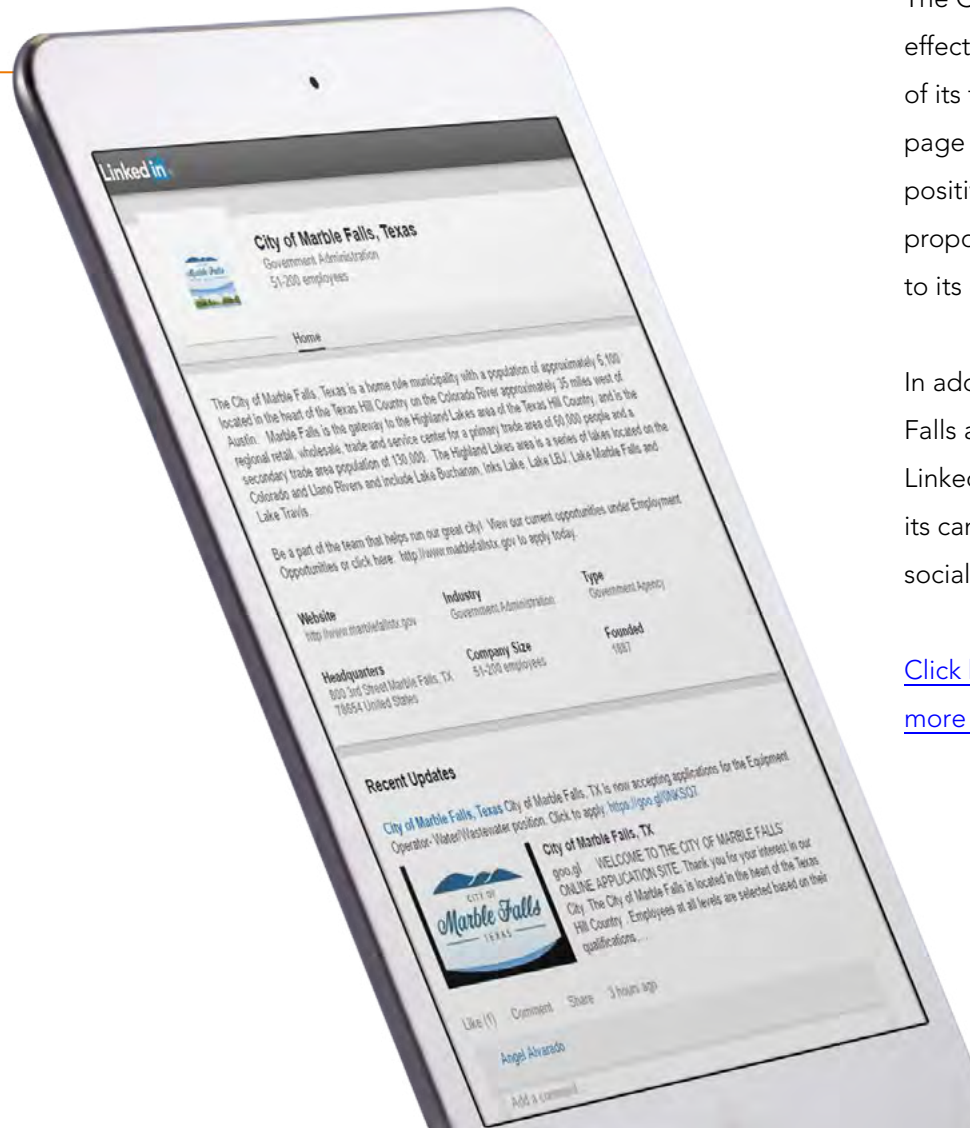
Just as we've seen with other social media platforms, a significant amount of LinkedIn's usage is conducted on mobile. 40 percent of LinkedIn users utilize the LinkedIn mobile app to search for jobs,²¹ and 44,000 job applications are submitted via LinkedIn mobile daily.

If you plan to use LinkedIn to help identify and recruit talent for your local government, keep these best practices in mind:

- Keep open positions on your community's LinkedIn page up to date. Maintaining current recruitment data makes you 18 times more likely to be found in searches by LinkedIn users.
- Make sure your community's entire social media presence is engaging and current. LinkedIn job seekers are likely to visit Facebook or Twitter when researching whether or not they want to work for your community. All of your social media platforms should reinforce the value in being a part of your community and its administration.
- Encourage influential and well-connected employees to share LinkedIn posts and job listings with their own LinkedIn and other social networks.

²¹DMR, "LinkedIn Job Statistics," <http://expandedramblings.com/index.php/linkedin-job-statistics/>

LINKEDIN



The City of Marble Falls, Texas, for example, is effectively utilizing LinkedIn as an integral part of its talent acquisition strategy. Its LinkedIn page reflects engaged employee profiles, a positive description of its community and a value proposition for employment, and provides links to its civic website.

In addition, the human resource team at Marble Falls actively posts open job descriptions to its LinkedIn page, to further amplify the reach of its candidate searches and further strengthen its social media presence.

[Click here to learn how to leverage LinkedIn for more than talent recruitment.](#)



Instagram

INSTAGRAM

Usage:

400 million users.²²

Purpose:

To capture and share the world's moments as they happen.

Benefit to Local Government:

Key to engaging young voters.

Instagram is all about sharing photos specifically from a mobile device. This social media platform allows users to upload photos taken with their mobile device camera, add appealing filters to enhance the appearance of the photo, tag friends and locations, and add hashtags and comments. Instagram is so focused on its concept of sharing strictly mobile device photos that it does not offer a desktop interface for users to upload content.

Whereas many social media platforms are becoming ubiquitous among all population demographics, Instagram is still currently a social media platform more heavily adopted by younger users. 90 percent of Instagram users today are younger than age 35.²³ In fact, 32 percent of U.S. teenagers cite Instagram as their favorite social network.

Despite its popularity among a younger audience, use of Instagram is growing rapidly, unlike Twitter, which has seen declining usage. The number of registered users on Instagram has doubled in the last two years.

THE POWER OF VIDEO

Like the shift to video made by Facebook, Instagram is also looking to evolve to meet users' growing interest in video by allowing video footage to be posted to its user streams. Again, underscoring the ability to engage users with video, when Instagram introduced videos on its platform, more than 5 million videos were shared in 24 hours.

²²Brandwatch, "Marketing: 96 Amazing Social Media Statistics and Facts for 2016." <https://www.brandwatch.com/2016/03/96-amazing-social-media-statistics-and-facts-for-2016/>

²³Brandwatch, "Marketing: 96 Amazing Social Media Statistics and Facts for 2016." <https://www.brandwatch.com/2016/03/96-amazing-social-media-statistics-and-facts-for-2016/>

INSTAGRAM



HOW TO MAKE AN INSTA-IMPACT

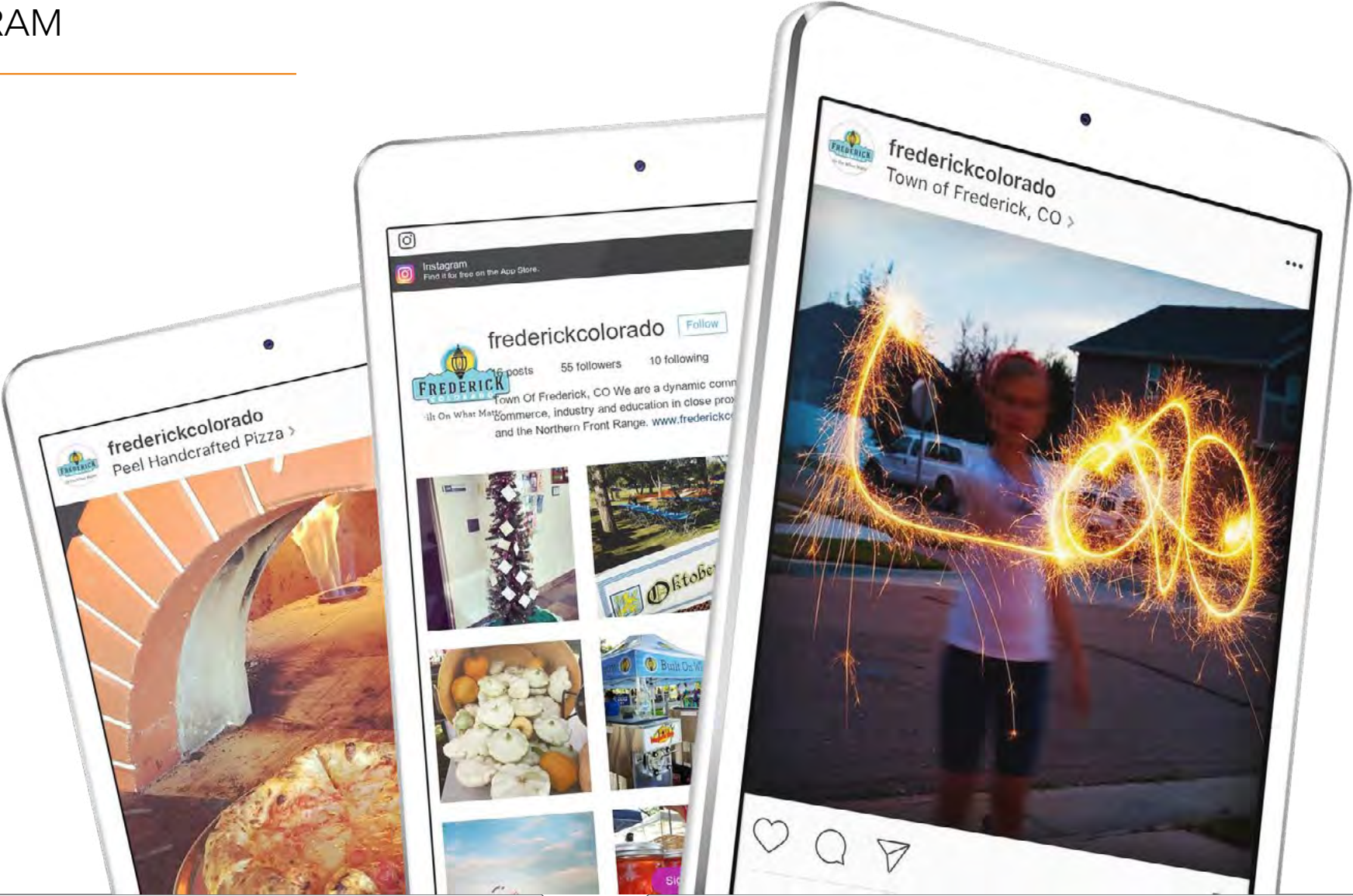
Instagram is an important platform for local governments looking to connect with young voters. It also offers the ideal platform to share beautiful community imagery. If you are going to engage with citizens on Instagram, follow these best practices:

- Where relevant, include another Instagram user's handle (or account name) in your post, such as nearby communities or affiliated organizations. Posts that include another handle gain 56% more engagement.

- Don't forget to #hashtag. Posts with at least one hashtag gain 12.6% more engagement. Don't be afraid to simply use your community's name as a hashtag. 70% of the most used hashtags are branded.
- Tag your location. Posts that include a location receive 79% more engagement.

The Town of Frederick, Colorado effectively uses Instagram to showcase photos of those events, scenes, and moments that make its community unique. It also leverages hashtags and other Instagram handles to amplify the reach of its messages. [Click here for tips on optimizing photos for social media](#)

INSTAGRAM





Pinterest

PINTEREST

Usage:

100 million users.²⁴

Purpose:

To serve as the world's catalogue of ideas. Pinterest users are encouraged to find, save, and share content such as recipes, life hacks, style inspiration, and ideas to try on personal theme "boards."

Benefit to Local Government:

Engage with citizens by sharing local inspirational imagery.

²⁴Brandwatch, "Marketing: 96 Amazing Social Media Statistics and Facts for 2016." <https://www.brandwatch.com/2016/03/96-amazing-social-media-statistics-and-facts-for-2016/>

²⁵Brandwatch, "Marketing: 96 Amazing Social Media Statistics and Facts for 2016." <https://www.brandwatch.com/2016/03/96-amazing-social-media-statistics-and-facts-for-2016/>

The increasing popularity of Pinterest is part of the overall trend toward visual social media content sharing and engagement, making Pinterest ideal for organizations and entities with strong visual content.

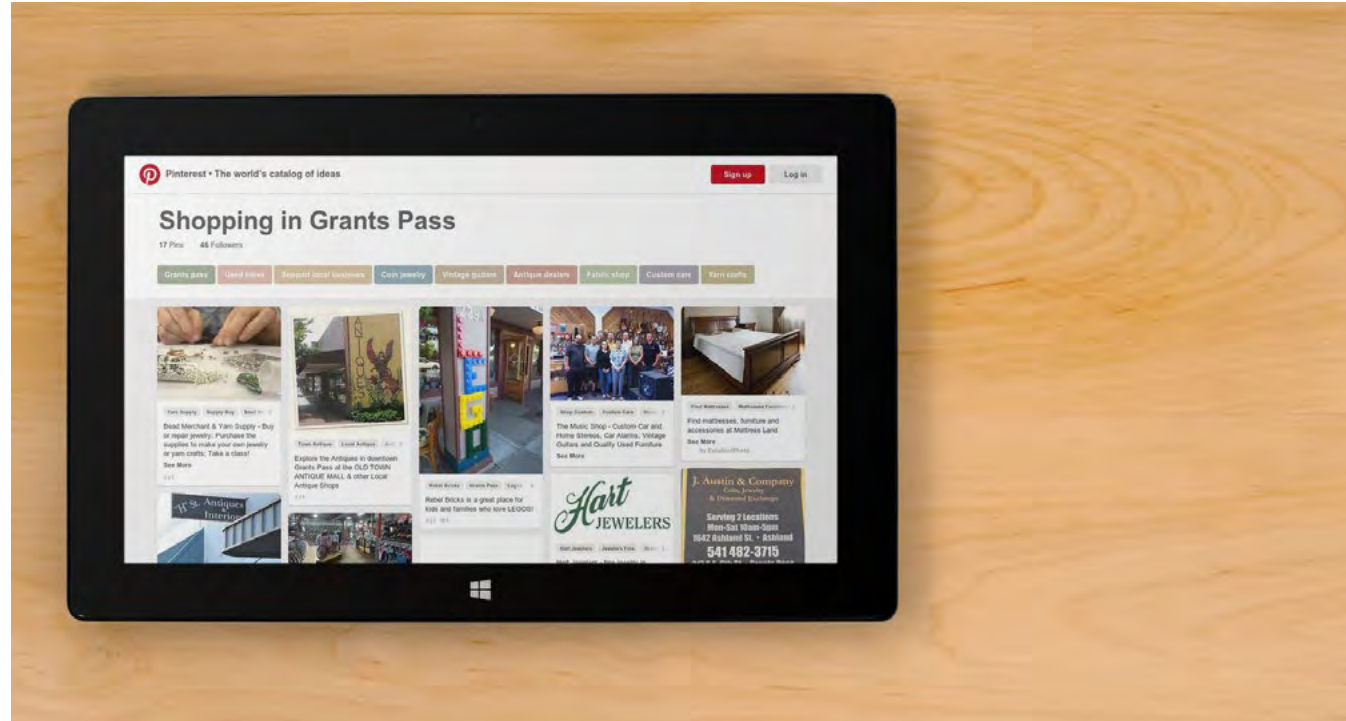
While, like Instagram, Pinterest is predicated on the sharing of individual images, the majority of "Pins" are not user-submitted content. Most are images shared from the web, and include links to view the original content source. In fact, 66 percent of content that users Pin comes from branded websites. Pinterest offers users a bulletin board style image sharing platform, allowing users to organize saved and shared Pins by self-designated categories, such as "travel," "home," "recipes," or "DIY inspiration."

Pinterest offers an effective platform for reaching women engaged with social media. 42 percent

of all online women use Pinterest to share and save ideas.²⁵

As we've seen with other social media sites, images are an effective way to engage citizens on social media, and Pinterest is no exception. For local governments, Pinterest can be an effective tool as part of a larger social media strategy. If you are already sharing images on Facebook and Instagram, those same images can also be shared on Pinterest as another available channel that can help to amplify your social media strategy and engage with citizens. Consider creating themed Pinterest boards on niche community topics. For example, consider creating boards for such themes as local attractions, parks and recreation, and downtown landmarks.

PINTEREST



If tourism is an important aspect of your community's economy, Pinterest can be an effective way to capture the attention of travelers. For example, the tourism department at Grants, Pass, Oregon uses Pinterest to engage travelers and capture their attention while encouraging visits. The "Travel Grants Pass" Pinterest page includes 12 boards that focus

on such niche, but locally inspired imagery as "Beautiful Views in Grants Pass," "Things to Do in Grants Pass," "Attractions Near Grants Pass," and "Eating in Grants Pass." Its popular "Shopping in Grants Pass" Pinterest Page allows for the sharing of products and images sold by local retailers. [Click here for an example of a community using Pinterest to promote tourism.](#)



Periscope

PERISCOPE

Usage:

10 million users²⁶

Purpose:

To enable users to “go live” with video using a mobile device anytime and anywhere.

Benefit to Local Government:

To engage citizens with live videos of community events.

Purchased in February, 2015 by Twitter, Periscope is a live mobile video streaming service that is competing directly with Facebook Live. Periscope allows individuals, brands, and local governments to become their own on-the-go broadcasting station by streaming live video and audio.

Where Facebook Live has an advantage over Periscope, is that it has 171 billion users. Periscope’s 10 million users are minute in comparison, which means that brands and institutions looking to engage a wide demographic of social media users with live video may be better-off utilizing Facebook.

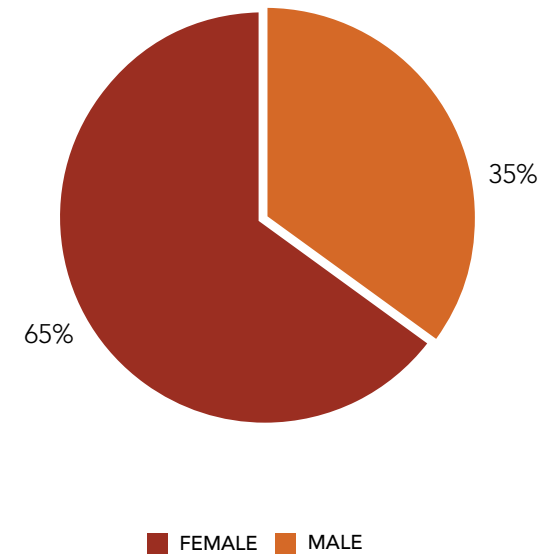
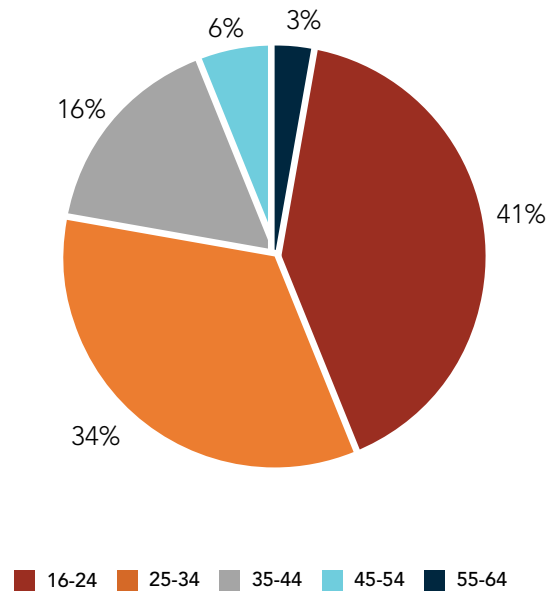
Similar to Facebook Live, Periscope videos offer longevity, playback, and social sharing. While sharing live video is a great way to engage with citizens during live events, such as town hall meetings, community parades, and ribbon cutting ceremonies, if followers miss the live feed, they can still watch a replay at a later time.

Though a smaller platform in terms of user size when compared to Facebook, Periscope has some unique features. The Periscope mobile-centric platform incorporates notifications and geo-location information as well as social sharing on Twitter, live discussions, and feedback, to create a sort of community around its video broadcasters.

²⁶Brandwatch, “Marketing: 96 Amazing Social Media Statistics and Facts for 2016.” <https://www.brandwatch.com/2016/03/96-amazing-social-media-statistics-and-facts-for-2016/>

PERISCOPE

Demographic of Periscope Users:



Like Instagram, Periscope can be effective in reaching younger voters, as 75 percent of its users are between the ages of 16 and 34.²⁷ The graphs above represent a more detailed demographic breakdown of Periscope usage.

²⁷GlobalWebIndex, <http://www.globalwebindex.net/blog/3-in-4-periscop-users-are-16-34>

PERISCOPE



If you're looking for creative ideas to incorporate Periscope's live video offering into your community engagement strategy, consider these ideas:

- Host a live Q&A with community leadership. Your audience can send you questions for review. Serve as the moderator and let your mayor, county executive, or other civic leader answer direct citizen inquiries.
- Share town hall meetings and public forums. Increase your overall attendance at key community discussions by opening them up to digital attendees.
- Live stream monumental community events. Ribbon cutting ceremonies, swearing-in ceremonies, building demolitions, and parades are all engaging events that citizens may not be able to attend in person.
- Community repairs. Broadcast live footage of your department of public works repairing a road, installing new street signage, or repaving a sidewalk. Infrastructure is incredibly important to citizens, and seeing direct responses to their needs is sure to gain their attention and their appreciation.

Social Media During Natural Disasters

SOCIAL MEDIA DURING NATURAL DISASTERS

When disaster strikes a community, citizens will turn to their local government to advise and inform. Your disaster communication strategy should be predicated upon a multichannel approach to citizen messaging. The most effective strategies incorporate social media.

As we've discussed, a significant portion of social media use takes place on mobile devices. That means that local governments have the ability to leverage social media to reach citizens no matter where they are in the community. Posting critical information to Facebook and Twitter provides not only an additional channel for reaching citizens who are already following your community's social media presence, it enables citizens to share your message with their own followers, helping to extend the reach of your message to others in your community.

Consider these best practices for utilizing social media during a natural disaster or community emergency:

- Keep messages short and actionable. Give citizens specific feedback such as the location of emergency shelters, road closure updates, and emergency instructions.
- Link to more detailed content, such as emergency evaluation maps or shelter lists.
- Include hashtags to amplify the reach of your message (e.g., #HurricaneMartha).
- Send updates frequently. One of the greatest benefits of social media is its instant impact. Citizens will be looking for continual updates, so keep tweets, posts, and shares of valuable news, information, and instructions coming frequently.

SOCIAL MEDIA DURING NATURAL DISASTERS

- Utilize a content management system (CMS) that allows you to send important communications to all your social media channels in a single step. Your administrators will be extremely busy during an emergency event and will not have time to recraft and resend the same message within multiple social media sites.
- Use a CMS that enables your administrators to craft and send messages from a mobile device. Emergencies don't just strike Monday through Friday from 9 – 5. Your administrators may be out of the office or out in the community when an emergency occurs and will need to be able to distribute social media updates from a mobile device.
- Choose a CMS that integrates with the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS). IPAWS is designed to

help create and distribute local emergency notifications to your community through all the nation's available alert and warning channels, such as TV, AM/FM radios, WEA capable wireless devices, and NOAA weather radio.

- Continue to share updates even when an event has ended. Your community will be just as interested to learn about your community's recovery and clean-up progress. Share photos and videos of recovery initiatives to keep citizens informed and optimistic.

[Click here to download the eBook, *A Comprehensive Guide to Natural Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Communications.*](#)

DAMAGE CONTROL

Is what's holding you back from implementing a social media communication strategy for your community a fear of the negative comment, tweet, or post? If so, know that citizen feedback, even negative, is not a bad thing, and it can be properly managed without derailing the benefits of a social media campaign.

A negative comment, or piece of feedback, is an opportunity to engage. The worst thing you can do with a negative comment made on one of your social media pages by a citizen is to ignore it. Not only does this leave the negative commenter dissatisfied, and feeling like his community does not address his needs or listen to his voice, it also sends that same message to everyone who saw the negative post, and saw that your administration did not respond.

A negative social media post, just like a negative walk-in, phone call, or letter, is an opportunity for local government to solve a problem and turn an unhappy, vocal citizen into a satisfied, or maybe even delighted, vocal citizen.

If a citizen posts a negative comment to one of your social media sites, respond with feedback. Answer his or her question, or give an update on the project in question. For example, if a citizen complains about a pot hole at a busy intersection, respond with an update as to when your road crews are expected to fix the pavement. Not only will the commenter be pleased to know that his community is addressing his needs, all your other followers will see that their local leaders are responsive.



A Note About Offensive Comments

Freedom of speech applies to social media, but as an administrator of a social media page or account, you do have the ability to hide, or block commenters posting spam, or inciteable, or offensive comments on your page. If a commenter is posting inappropriate content, he or she can be blocked and the inappropriate content may be removed.

When you launch your social media strategy, create internal guideline and workflows for how to respond to all types of comments to ensure timely, and consistent responses.

How to Implement a Social Media Campaign

Overwhelmed? Don't be. No matter the size of your community, or your communications staff, you can implement a successful and effective social media campaign that can help you to meet your goals. What follows are tips for getting started.

See our CivicPlus Social Media Tip Sheet at the end of this guide for more information.

DESIGNATE A SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER

Depending on the size of your staff, this could be a qualified member of your team, or it may be you. If you have limited resources and are worried about the time it will take to incorporate social media into your already busy schedule, know that you don't have to implement every available social media platform, and post, tweet, and share every hour, on the hour. Think of social media as a way to share the communications you are already creating—things like press releases, blog posts on your website, and photos from community events.

BUILD A CONTENT CALENDAR

The best way to build social media into your schedule is to plan ahead. If you already use a content calendar to plan your monthly, quarterly, or annual communications, add social media posts to that calendar. Again, focus on sharing via social media the content you are already creating. [Click here](#) for more information on how to build a content calendar.

If you aren't already using a content calendar, build one to manage your social media content. To ensure you are sharing timely and relevant content, plan for just a month at a time, or even a week at a time if you want to start small. In addition to sharing existing content, plan a combination of posts and shares that ranges from seasonal information, holiday wishes, general reminders, upcoming events,

community photos, local news, and any other content unique to your community. Planning ahead will help ensure your social media activity is consistent and timely, without becoming a strain on your busy schedule.

To help you stay organized and plan ahead, consider utilizing one of the many subscription-based social media tools that are available that allow you to schedule posts in advance. Using one of these tools allows you to set aside a designated hour in your week to pre-plan posts, tweets, and shares. By adding breaking news and live event postings to what you already scheduled, you'll easily be sharing plenty of content to engage citizens.

START SMALL

If this is your first experience implementing social media for your community, start with just one or two platforms. Use the information in this guide to choose the one or two platforms that you think will best fit the needs of your community, or be manageable for you and your staff. For most communities, we would recommend starting with Facebook, and then adding Twitter if time allows.

Remember, you can always add platforms later if you feel they can be easily managed and add value, but if you create a social media account on one of these platforms and do not regularly add content, it likely will not produce valuable citizen engagement.

[Click here](#) for more tips on how to implement a social media campaign.

A Final Word on Social Media Best Practices

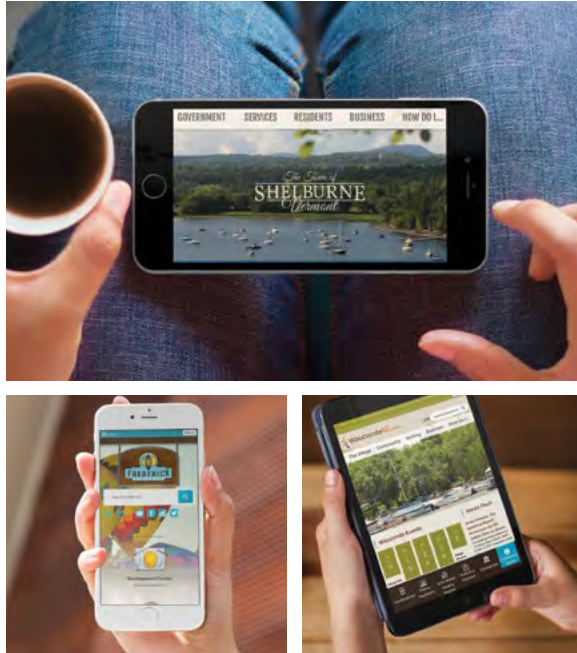
SOCIAL MEDIA BEST PRACTICES

Hopefully, you now have some ideas for how your community can leverage the variety of existing social media platforms to better engage and connect with your citizens. No matter what networks you use, keep these final best practices in mind:

- Make sure your social media accounts serve as an extension of your community’s “brand,” and that the images, voice, and content you share is a reflection of your community’s unique personality.
- Use social media consistently. If you only post occasionally, and when you do, the content is not of value, citizens will be less likely to follow your social accounts and look for future updates.
- Post news timely. Social media allows for an instant distribution of information.
- Share breaking news and as-it-happens photos and videos for best engagement.
- When [a community disaster or emergency event occurs](#), share frequent and actionable updates to your social media sites.
- Keep messages brief and add links to longer content.



Conclusion



Social media is one of the best ways to connect with, and engage today's citizens. Remember that whether at home, at work, or on the go, citizens are using mobile devices to read news, share life moments, be entertained, and even take civic action. With a consistent, creative, and mobile optimized strategy, your local government can leverage social media to become an even more thoroughly integrated component of your citizens' daily lives.



About the Author



CivicPlus is the integrated technology platform for local government, working with over 2,500 local governments including municipalities, counties, and municipal departments. CivicPlus has been selected by Inc. Magazine as “One of the Fastest-Growing Privately Held Companies in the U.S.” since 2011. For more information visit [CivicPlus.com](https://www.CivicPlus.com).





Glossary

GLOSSARY

BOARDS – On social media site Pinterest, boards are where users save Pins. Users can make theme boards for any topic of interest.

FACEBOOK – A social networking site that allows users to connect and share messages, videos, links, and photos with family and friends.

HASHTAG (#) – On social media sites such as Twitter and Instagram, a word or phrase preceded by a hash or pound sign (#) that is used to identify messages on a specific topic.

INSTAGRAM – An online mobile photo-sharing, video-sharing, and social networking service that enables its users to take pictures and videos, and share them either publicly or privately, as well as through a variety of other social networking platforms, including Facebook and Twitter.

LIKE – A social media interface feature that allows users to show their support for specific comments, pictures, wall posts, statuses, or fan pages. After a user “likes” something, their news feed is updated, letting their friends know what pages they “like.” If a user clicks a “like” button on a web page, their news feed will be updated with a link to the web page.

LINKEDIN – A social networking website designed for business professionals that allows users to share work-related information with other users and keep an online list of professional contacts.

PERISCOPE – A video streaming social media site.

GLOSSARY

PINS – A visual bookmark used on the social media site Pinterest. Each Pin links back to the site it came from, so the viewer can learn more—like how to make, or where to buy pinned products.

PINTEREST – An online service that allows a user to share images through social networking.

SOCIAL MEDIA – Websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking.

SOCIAL NETWORK – A dedicated website or other application that enables users to communicate with each other by posting information, comments, messages, images, etc.

TWITTER – A free social network that serves as a microblogging platform. Registered users can share images, text, and videos. Such messaged content are called “tweets.”

TWITTERVERSE – A term used to describe the collective number of members that utilize the social media network Twitter. The twitterverse is also known as the twitosphere or twittersphere.

TWEET – A post made on the microblogging platform Twitter. Tweets cannot exceed 140 characters in length.

YOUTUBE – A free video-hosting website that allows members to store and serve video content.

CIVICPLUS SOCIAL MEDIA TIP SHEET

This chart will help guide you in planning what type of content to share on what type of social media site, and with what frequency. While some content can be shared on multiple platforms (making your job easier), you should still plan to tailor your content to suit the functionality, and audience base of each social site.

PLATFORM	WHAT TO SHARE	WHEN TO SHARE
Facebook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local news Upcoming events Emergency notifications Historical trivia Local sports news Local school news 	At least 3X per week
Twitter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local news Upcoming events Emergency notifications Local sports news Local school news 	At least 3X per week When community and/or national news breaks
YouTube	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Video news segments Videos of local sporting events Videos of community events (parades, fairs, concerts, sports, etc.) Videos of local business success stories 	As new video content is produced
LinkedIn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job postings HR-related upcoming events, such as job fairs 	Weekly As new jobs are posted

*Remember to schedule posts on the weekends too. There are a variety of subscription-based social media tools available that allow you schedule posts in advance.

*Remember the best time of the day to post to social media, aside from when news breaks or a live event occurs, is during the hours of 9 a.m. and 2 p.m.

PLATFORM	WHAT TO SHARE	WHEN TO SHARE
Instagram	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Photos of community events Photos of community landmarks Photos of local sporting events Seasonal community photos Community holiday photos User-submitted community photos 	At least 3X per week
Pinterest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historical community photos User-submitted community photos Tourist attractions Community landmarks Seasonal community photos Community holiday photos 	As high quality community images are available
Periscope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Live footage of community events (parades, fairs, concerts, sports, etc.) Live footage of town hall meetings 	At all relevant community events

The PIO's Ultimate Guide to Social Media



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