



Mayor's Office of the  
Chief Technology Officer

## NYC Digital - Medium Guidelines and Best Practices Updated Summer 2017

### Audience

- 95% are college-educated
- 43% of them earn six figures or more
- Skews young, with 50% between 18-34, 70% under 50
- Early adopters, tech and design workers
- Smaller readership than other networks

### Post Frequency

- At least 1 post per month

### Engagement

- Follows (account)
- Subscribes (account)
- Shares (post)
- Recommend (post)
- Highlights (post)
- Bookmarks (post)

### Content Types

- Photo galleries
- Medium-long form text posts

### Content Topics

- Op-eds
- Articles
- Essays
- Event recaps
- News and announcements
- Features about / interviews with individuals

### ROI

- Traffic to your site



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Chief Technology Officer**

- Shares of content
- Increased understanding of your agency's work
- Interest in events
- User-generated feedback and comments

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### **Naming Your Medium Account**

Your account name should be based on keywords relevant to the services your agency provides. Keywords should relate back to how the public is searching for your agency or services.

E.g.:

NYC Digital Strategy

NYC Commission on Human Rights

NYC Parks

Username should be consistent with your name on other social media channels.

E.g.:

@nycdigital

@NYCCHR

@NYCParks

### **Account Descriptions**

This will be used in footers, search results, and other places. Account descriptions should begin with "The official Medium channel of [name of your agency]." followed by a 1-2 sentence description of your agency's work. The character limit for these is 160, so certain words can be shortened or omitted (e.g., as below).

E.g.:

Official Medium channel of Mayor's Office of Digital Strategy. Helping create the most user-friendly city in the world.

### **Publishing Protocol**



**Mayor's Office of the  
Chief Technology Officer**

Individual Channels: Agencies with approved accounts can post Stories to their individual Agency channels.

cityofny Publication: Agencies will be named as Writers on the [cityofny publication](#) account. As a Writer, you can submit a draft of any Story you wish to have re-published on the cityofny Publication. This will be sent for approval to the publication Editors (MODS), and re-published at their discretion.

## **Photos**

Profile Photos:

- Profile photos should be your agency's logo. (Medium will scale it to 100 x 100.)
  - Inline Images:
    - Inline images can be inserted two ways: Either drag the image to where the cursor is, or hit return to access the "+" icon menu. Open the menu and choose the camera icon to add an image.
    - Choose your image, hit okay, and then click it to access the formatting toolbar.
    - Medium offers four different types of inline images. The first two options have the same resolution requirements: 900+ pixels on the long side. (To add a link to your image, click on the image so it has a green border, and press Command+K on Mac, Control+K on PC. Add your destination URL.)

## **Best Practices**

- Posts that are at least 400 words in length tend to be the most popular. That said, readers spend an average of nearly two-and-a-half minutes on every Medium story. So it's best to avoid extra-long-form pieces.
- Medium is a great place for storytelling. Case studies, interviews with constituents, and individual profiles all make good post topics. Image and video always help make a story more compelling.
- For longer and/or denser pieces, make sure the big ideas are up-front.



Mayor's Office of the  
Chief Technology Officer

- Medium's user base skews young and well-educated, but it's still important to use language that's easy to read and understand. While this is a good platform to dive deeper into complex ideas and initiatives, keep an eye on your readability grade and remember that web readers' attention-levels are limited. (See [our post on plain language](#) for some helpful resources).
- Make your posts easy to read by using titles, subtitles, headings, bullets, and page breaks. Web users don't read online content the same way as print—instead of reading each line, they're more likely to scan between titles, headings, and links. Prepare for this by using content modules that give readers valuable information, even if they only give your post a quick scan. For more information on formatting your text, see Medium's article, [How to Win at Medium](#).

## Medium Planning Questions

1. **Goals:** What are your goals for this account? These can be metric-specific (e.g. you want to gain 500 followers in 3 months), and/or mission-driven (e.g. you want to raise awareness about labor issues relevant to your agency's base).
2. **Audiences:** Who is your audience? Why would they read your Medium posts? A useful strategy is to propose primary and secondary categories for your audience (e.g. Primary: individuals employed in relevant industries; Secondary: activists concerned with the work of your agency.)
3. **Content types and sample topics:** What types of content do you plan on posting on Medium? What are some sample topics? How will your content differ from other media sources?
4. **Publishing strategy:** Who will be responsible for assigning, writing, and editing the content? Do you plan on having a content calendar? How often do you plan on posting



Mayor's Office of the  
Chief Technology Officer

## Medium Workflow

Areas of workflow:

- Plan/pitch content
- Create or source content
- Revise/edit
- Approve
- Coordinate publication
- Evaluate content effectiveness

## Model Medium Accounts

### NYCEDC

<https://medium.com/@NYCEDC>

NYCEDC's account has clear primary and secondary target audiences: members of the communities in which EDC works, and those concerned with NYC's urban and economic development. Posts provide a digestible and informative record of EDC's ongoing initiatives. Broader policy discussion is embedded within event and [public meeting recaps](#), conversations with/about specific [community members](#), [project updates](#), and [bite-sized campaigns](#), as opposed to taking shape as extended think pieces. I especially like their [B Corp Community Spotlights](#), though unfortunately they haven't posted one in a while.

The channel's use of photographs and concise text make it well-suited for today's reading-averse user population. (Fun fact: average web readers [read at most 28% of words](#) on a webpage during a visit, though 20% is more likely!)

Avg. word count: 100-800

Post frequency: 2-5 (EDC sometimes posts multiple times in one day, probably because multiple pieces become available at once, or because a backlog is resolved in one day. Having a content calendar will help you distribute posts across the month.)

### The US Department of Labor

<https://medium.com/@USDOL>



**Mayor's Office of the  
Chief Technology Officer**

The US Department of Labor account clarifies the department's work using individual stories. For instance, [this post](#) features Q&A's with individuals working as apprentices, [this one](#) is a more in-depth profile of one person. Both tie the interviews back to USDL's own resources, making them good models for how to leverage community profiles to highlight and explain your agency's initiatives.

Other features include coverage of labor-related [issues](#), [events](#), and [policy](#). Importantly, these posts are kept relatively brief and public-facing—that is, they avoid jargon, simplify complex terms, and employ [storytelling techniques](#) to drive interest.

Avg. word count: 500-800

Post frequency: Inconsistent (some months have upwards of 5 posts, while many months are skipped)

**Code for America**

<https://medium.com/code-for-america>

Code for America is a Medium publication (vs. channel), and its posts can be more verbose and lengthier than your agency's should conceivably be. It does, however, offer examples of interesting content categories. Their Notes from our Founder category includes [op-eds](#) that speak to (and clarify) their policy initiatives, and defend their significance as an organization. The Stories from the Community category features coverage of happenings in the broader civic tech community, often guest-written by those outside the organization.

Avg word count: 400-1,000+

Post frequency: appx. 2x/month

**charity : water**

<https://medium.com/@charitywater>

This channel isn't updated very frequently (and largely just for giving campaigns), and their prose does trend towards corny. However, their content speaks to why Medium is a powerful storytelling platform. Consider [this visually captivating post](#), which appears as a beautiful photo essay and reads like a call-to-action. Similarly, [this post](#) and [this post](#) use photos, gifs, and video beautifully to tell the story of individual people. This use of people-centric visual content could be useful for profiling individual drivers, for instance.



**Mayor's Office of the  
Chief Technology Officer**

And, at a high level, charity:water uses Medium posts to humanize a huge topic tied to complex world systems (global access to clean water), both with storytelling, like the posts mentioned above, and using plain language and visuals to explain data: [this post](#), and [this post](#).

Word count: 400-1000

Post frequency: 1x/every few months

### **The Jewish Museum**

<https://medium.com/@TheJewishMuseum>

This channel is collaboratively run by the museum's staff (staff members who "guest-author" are credited at the bottom of the post). One of its strengths is the accessible tone—especially considering how art-speak tends to be overly cerebral. Your agency could similarly use the platform to clearly convey complex ideas. [This piece is a good example](#) (and also shows how they tie Medium to a cross-channel campaign).

By contrast, [this piece](#) focuses on the museum's website redesign, discussing the process and team behind it. Having this – let's call it 'internal' – content, versus 'subject-matter' content, like the piece above, creates a well-rounded picture of the Museum's work.

Avg. word count: Between 350-1,500, with most on the lower end

Post frequency: appx. 2-8/month, never less than 2