

Social Media Tips, Guidelines & Best Practices

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NYC[®]

Digital Strategy

Introduction

NYC's Social Media Guidebook contains rules, tips, and best practices for maintaining a strong social media presence. Though there are many recommendations out there for social media growth, it can be tricky to figure out which ones apply to government because the public sector has a different set of goals, resources, and rules. This Guidebook summarizes the government-specific recommendations of countless articles and influencers, as well as insights from your City colleagues.

Social media is a constantly evolving space with very few concrete rules. We hope you find this Guidebook useful whether you are a seasoned social media vet, or someone working with it for the first time. However, you might find that different tactics work for your accounts. If that is the case, let us know. We hope to update the Guidebook every three months to keep it fresh and relevant, and we depend on all of your insights to keep it relevant and useful.

Please feel free to email social@digital.nyc.gov anytime with ideas, questions, corrections.

With that in mind, there are three ways to frame the role of social media in government:

Social Media as Responsible Communications

City government has a duty to keep New Yorkers informed about its activities. As more and more New Yorkers get their information through social media, it becomes critical to make sure our digital communications are strong and representative of our values. Someone following you on social should have a firm understanding of what your department is all about.

Social Media as an Engagement Tool

Social media allows government to speak to New Yorkers directly and in real time. Social media managers can instantly see what people are saying about the latest agency initiative and residents are empowered to speak directly to government bodies.

Social Media as Service Delivery

The private sector set an expectation for social media to be used as a customer service vehicle. Social media is evolving to be a tool that agencies and offices can use to connect people with services, receive feedback, offer answers, and more. Think about how your agency can deliver services through social media.

Rules and Regulations

Rules and regulations for social media have been developed in partnership with the Law Department. If your agency developed a separate social media policy, these rules and regulations should complement them. Please contact social@digital.nyc.gov if there are any discrepancies.

Checklist for Official City Accounts

All city social media accounts must clearly indicate that they are official city properties. This is to make it clear to viewers that the information is official, and to guard against imposter accounts. Below is the mandated checklist:

-  The account must be registered through MODS. This ensures that the account appears on the Citywide directory of official accounts, that the manager of the account will receive resources and emergency notifications.
-  The account should be named in a way that clearly identifies the City agency or office, for example, @NYCParks or @NYC_DOT.
-  The profile picture should include an official logo using the City's "bubble letter" logo. Exceptions exist for agencies with unique logos.
-  The city's social media customer user policy should be clearly visible.
-  The account should be verified by the social media network. A verified badge is the fastest way to signal to viewers that it is an official account. Ask MODS for help obtaining one by emailing social@digital.nyc.gov.
-  The profile name should clearly indicate that it is a city government account.
-  All profile images have to be high-quality and not pixelated on any screen. Ask MODS for help in obtaining a high-resolution image by emailing social@digital.nyc.gov.
-  The 'info' section of the profile should explain what the department does in plain language. On Twitter, a pinned tweet can serve as the account's mission statement if there is not enough character space in the information section.

NYC Bubble Letters Brand Guidelines

All agency profile pictures need to show the official NYC logo branding or official agency logo. The NYC logo branding comes with specific usage guidelines. Please let MODS know if you have any questions about using the logo by emailing social@digital.nyc.gov. If your agency does not have the capacity to comply with these guidelines, we may be able to find a solution.



Copyright Laws and Intellectual Property

Social media is a new and different type of publishing, and its relationship with copyright is a developing area of law. The City's goal is to respect the spirit of copyright laws as closely as possible.

Copyright laws protect "original works of authorship," such as original writing, imagery, and music. They apply to both published and unpublished works. When you use an original work without proper permissions, you run the risk of copyright infringement and legal action by the content creator.

Directly reposting a tweet or Facebook post is completely okay. However, if you are posting directly from your own account, rather than reposting, you have to make sure that you have proper permissions to use any images, videos, and brand logos. It is safest to use content that the agency or City created itself.

Some content is in the public domain, which means it is available for use. Additionally, some copyright agreements contain explicit permissions for using work. If you locate material that you want to include in your social media feeds or postings, make sure that you follow any permission guidelines. Just because something is available online doesn't mean it's free for the taking.

Creative Commons is a place where you can view and use thousands of images with proper permission or with clear indication of how images may be used and what crediting or permissions are required.

Posting to Outside Links

Posting links to external non-City websites, including news articles, is now allowed. However, City programs and services should first be promoted on our native channels, and only promoted with external links afterwards. For example, if your agency has a new initiative out with an exclusive scoop in the *New York Times*, you should post about the initiative first, before linking to positive media coverage.

Some exceptions apply, for example, if an article runs before your agency has final content prepared, you might consider linking to the article as a preview. But in general, it is the city's job to present the information that is important for New Yorkers to know, and even positive or neutral articles might overlook key pieces of information.

Passwords

It's every agency's responsibility to keep passwords used to log into social media accounts as secure as possible.

Tips for creating secure passwords:

- Relay passwords over the phone or in person only. Don't send them over email or text.
- Use a minimum of eight characters.
- Where possible, use a mix of numbers, letters, and special characters.
- Don't make the password easy to guess, like "12345", or "password".
- The password you use should not be found in the dictionary.
- Do not use pet's name, school name, city of birth, favorite team, etc.
- Avoid sequences or repeated characters.
- Avoid using look-alike substitutions for numbers or symbols like, "p@ssw0rd".
- Use more than one password everywhere.
- Avoid using online or local storage of passwords.

A handy trick for creating passwords is to convert a sentence you can remember into a string of letters and numbers. For example: "Beyonce Is a Star Forever" can turn into Beei@*43V3r.

Emergency Protocol

An emergency is anything that may put New Yorkers in danger, or may be perceived to put New Yorkers in danger. For example, flood warnings constitute an emergency, but so does a terrorist attack in another state, since news of both might make New Yorkers uneasy.

The Mayor's Office of Communications decides whether something is an emergency. They may call for all outbound social posts to be paused, or mandate certain messaging to inform all NYC account followers of critical information.

One specific type of emergency that social media managers might encounter is a cyber attack, such as someone hacking into an agency Twitter account to post rude comments. In case of a suspected cyber attack, please notify MODS by emailing social@digital.nyc.gov, DoITT, and your press liaison. Be sure to screenshot evidence of the hack before deleting them.

Accounts for Individuals Rather than Agencies

Within city government, social media accounts are typically created to represent agencies. Occasionally, an agency might want to create an official social media account for an individual, like the head of the department or a press officer.

An account made for a City worker in an official capacity operates differently than that worker's own personal account.

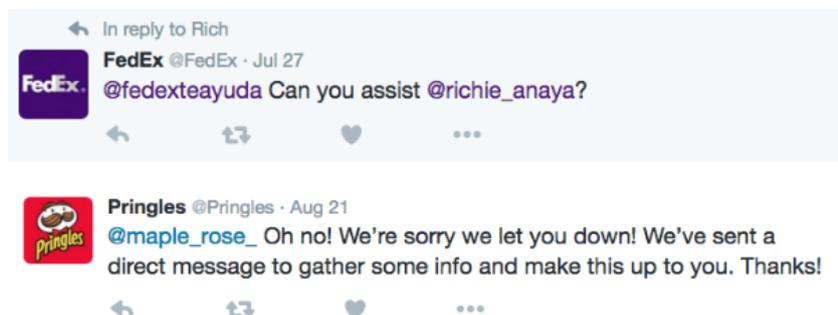
Individuals authorized to post on social media platforms as part of their City work must comply with all City and agency guidelines while doing so. This includes linking to the User Social Media Policy, and retention policies. They may post on City time using City resources, which includes employees. These accounts become public property and do not transfer to the employee's personal use should they leave the City. In other words, if an account was created for a Commissioner to use in her official capacity, she does not get to keep the account after her service is over. The account should be clearly labeled with the official's title, for example Commissioner O'Neill, @NYPDONEill.

A personal account may be turned into an official account, but that account is considered donated to the City and stays with the City should the employee leave. Personnel who wish to use social media in a personal capacity must indicate they are only representing themselves, and cannot do so on City time or use City resources, including personnel. For information on personal use of social media sites during work hours, please check with your agency's Acceptable Use Policy.

| Official City Accounts for City Workers | City Worker's Personal Account |
|---|---|
| May be used for promoting agency work. | May be used for promoting agency work. |
| May be taken as official agency commentary. | May not be taken as official agency commentary. |
| Must comply with all City rules and regulations for social media accounts. | Does not have to comply with all City rules and regulations for social media accounts other than agency guidelines specific to personal usage. |
| May not engage in overtly political endorsements or campaign activity. | May engage in campaign or political activity subject to COIB and other restrictions. |
| Must archive all posts for FOIL requests. | Is not covered by FOIL under most circumstances if no official business is conducted or discussed. |
| Must stay with the City and is considered City property. | Does not have to stay with the City, and is considered personal property. |
| May not delete comments unless they violate the City's terms of service and user policy. | May delete comments as per the owner's discretion. |
| Can be worked on by City employees apart from the person the account represents. | Cannot be worked on by City employees apart from the owner. |
| Cannot be transferred for personal use. | May be transferred for official use, but cannot then be transferred back. |

Responding to Requests

If you take any big company and look at their Tweets & Replies, you will see that they actively respond to user complaints and questions.



Not only is this a smart strategy for engaging with users, it is something that is expected from entities that choose to have a social media presence. Although City government may not have the same resources as these companies, we must do our best to engage with New Yorkers and make them feel satisfied with our services.

All social media channels should be monitored as often as possible in order to respond to and review comments or requests. It's a good idea to be clear about how often you monitor your social media accounts, so that users have a reasonable expectation of when to get a reply. This can live somewhere in your About info.

Agencies should try their best to answer user questions. For issues or concerns where answers would be useful to a large segment of your followers, consider sharing the answer broadly via the channel on which it was raised. For information requests that are specific to a particular use, or if a service complaint needs to be submitted because a complaint involved reporting a defect or a condition, agencies should loop @NYC311 into the conversation. @NYC311 will then offer a reply.

For more successful interactions, use language that shows the user that the agency is taking an active step in getting them closer to a solution. For example, "*Thanks for letting us know! Looping in @NYC311 to help.*" is better than "*Please report your problem to @NYC311.*" Even though they accomplish the same thing, the former option feels like the agency is taking more of a responsibility.

New Social Media Accounts

All new accounts need to be approved by MODS. To have a new account approved, fill out the Request a Social Media Channel form. This approval process ensures that the quality of our social media presence, as a city, remains strong. MODS retains the ability to deny the creation of any new social media account if the agency cannot provide a legacy system and a unique need for said account. Apply for an account online.

Accounts are evaluated on an individual basis. Below is a helpful checklist of some of what we look for:

- At least one staffer who can devote 50% of his or her time on social media communications.
- Written explanation of the goal the agency hopes to achieve, and how this social media account will accomplish that goal.
- Sample posts that the agency plans on using.
- Evidence of feedback that shows that the target audience is interested in this social media account and cannot be helped through existing accounts.
- Growth plan and strategy.

FOIL and Archiving

Social Media posts are official government records that must be maintained according to record retention policies. These records are subject to inspection and/or production in the case of a court order or upon request from the public.

The Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) gives people the right to access government documents. This includes social media posts. Unlike emails, social media posts are not automatically saved. It is each agency's responsibility to make sure that posts are available for FOIL requests.

Some social media networks, like Twitter, make social media posts available at any point in time, but others like Tumblr, are more challenging to backdate. Keep in mind that all deleted posts must be archived before deletion so they can also be included in any FOIL requests.

The City is currently working on procuring a tool that will automatically archive the posts, saving agencies a lot of hassle. Stay tuned and make sure that your accounts are registered through MODS so that you will have access to this tool!

If you have questions on FOIL compliance, you should first confer with your agency's FOIL officer.

Deleting Posts

A comment cannot be deleted just because it says something unsavory about the administration.

Below are the circumstances in which it is okay to delete a post, as per our Social Media User Guide:

- Comments that do not directly relate to the purpose or topic of the social media website
- Comments promoting or opposing any person campaigning for election to a political office, or promotion or advertisement of a business or commercial transaction.
- The use of obscene, threatening or harassing language is prohibited.
- Personal attacks of any kind or offensive comments that target or disparage any ethnic, racial, age, or religious group, gender, sexual orientation, or disability status are prohibited.
- Comments advocating illegal activity or posting of material that violates copyrights or trademarks of others are prohibited.

Each social media platform has its own Terms of Service. You are encouraged to report content that violates the Terms of Service of the platform since Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr each have their own guidelines that the offending user may be violating. This is especially important if a commenter offensively targets a specific group of people.

If you have questions about when it is appropriate to take action under the City's guidelines, your first resource is your agency general counsel.

Rules and Regulations

These are general best practices that apply to all social channels.

Content

Your posts are competing against surprise Beyoncé album drops, celebrity Twitter feuds, and cute cat videos. To cut through the fray and let New Yorkers know about your agency, your content needs to be excellent.

Of course, that is easier said than done. Below are some things to keep in mind:



Useful/Fun test. A good rule of thumb for judging content is thinking about whether it is either useful, like letting people know where they can apply for affordable housing, or fun, like a playful GIF. Bonus points if you get both.



Know your audience. Think about why people are following your account and what kind of content they are looking for. For example, followers might be interested in learning more about your agency, in which case it is a good idea to sprinkle in a few evergreen posts explaining what your agency does, instead of tracking nuanced agency news.



People don't like meetings. People don't even like BEING in meetings, let alone reading tweets about them. Sometimes, a meeting with some policy makers is the highlight of OUR week, but let's not subject our innocent followers to photos of boardrooms, podium speeches, and Powerpoints.

-  **Unique selling point.** What does your agency do that other entities don't? What do you have access to that everyday New Yorkers don't? Is it photographs of beautiful parks, heartwarming stories, up-to-date storm info? Whatever it is, that's the stuff that only you can show off, so use it.
-  **Thought leadership.** We often hear from other municipalities that when NYC speaks, others listen. Think about how you can engage with the conversations happening in your agency's subject area.
-  **Voice.** Like with all writing, the most dynamic posts use an active, positive voice.
-  **No jargon.** Take a look at your recent posts and think about what words and hashtags you might be using that only a city work would know. Commissioner Smith might be one of the best commissioners in the GAME, but would an everyday New Yorker know who they are? NextGenNYCHA is a terrific program, but what does that term mean to a majority of New Yorkers?
-  **Engage with your followers.** 77% of Twitter users have reported more positive feelings about a brand when their Tweet has been replied to.

If you have questions about what content you should be posting about, MODS is happy to help.

Setting Goals

The most important thing to keep in mind about social media is that you need to keep experimenting to see which strategies work best for your goals. There are no hard rules in social media. Since it is a constantly changing field, the only way to keep up with the trends is to actively try new things and then track their success.

Missions

Retweets and impressions are not ends in and of themselves. Social media is a tool to keep New Yorkers informed, connected, and aware of the city's resources. Think about what your agency's core mission is, and how social can contribute to that. For example, if Zeus was setting up social media for Mt. Olympus, his mission might be to strike fear in the hearts of mortals. Social media can help with that.

Trackable goals

Once you know your mission, think about how it can translate into concrete (1) *metric goals* and (2) *content goals*.

(1) A **metric goal** is anything that can be measured numerically, like retweets, impressions, number of posts, etc. It is a good objective look at how your social media presence is growing.

A word of caution about metric goals is that you want to be careful about drawing any conclusions. For example, an agency might get a huge boost in impressions one week when their content was retweeted by a celebrity, but it's daily output could be stagnant. On the other hand, an agency might not be growing new followers regularly, but it might have its engagement with current audience radically improve, signaling a positive trend.

(2) A **content goal** speaks more to the type of posts you are putting out. It is important to have a content goal because you don't want to just think about raising retweets.

A word of caution here is that because a content goal is so subjective, it should be married with a metric goal to ensure that your strategy is working.

How this can look in practice: Zeus' metric goal might be to get 10,000 mortals to post positive comments on the Mt. Olympus Facebook page in a year. While his content goal might be to post more high-quality images of the gods being strong and ferocious.

Keep in mind, that investing in paid social can be a great way to reach more users. 34% of tech companies have reduced their traditional advertising budget to fund digital marketing activities.

Get tracking

Finally, you can begin to track your performance over a period a time. MODS's recommendation is to pick quarterly benchmarks you hope to hit, and we can help you find an analytics framework that matches your needs and bandwidth.

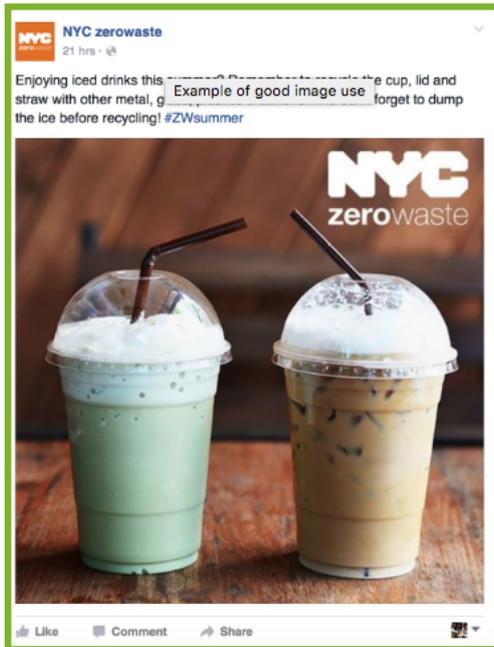
Photos/Graphics

It is no secret that images are key to success on social media. But there are better and worse ways to utilize images for your posts.

General Best Practices

- Use an image as often as possible in addition to your written content. For Facebook especially, every post needs a leading image in order to draw attention.

Good Image Use



Bad Image Use



- Think about how the image appears on a small screen. Photos with tiny details will not do as well on small screens, where they are most likely to be seen.

Good Image Use



Bad Image Use



- The best photos are vibrant and unexpected. Avoid stiff staged group photos, photos of meetings, photos of commissioners at podiums, and other types of images that don't tell interesting stories. The best images are self-explanatory.

Good Image Use



Bad Image Use



- Sometimes, we have to use our devices to take photos. In these cases, opt for the horizontal view and don't use the zoom function because it pixelates the image. If you need to zoom, move physically closer to the object or pick a different shot.

Good Image Use



Bad Image Use

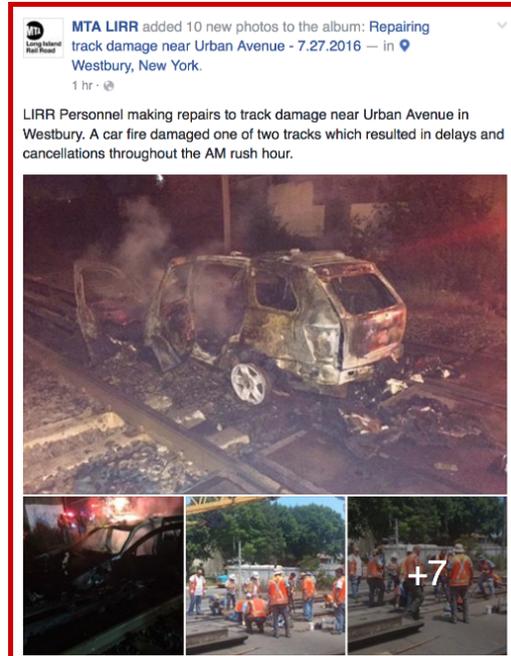


- Upload only one photo at the time. The chances of people clicking through a whole album are slim. Focus on uploading one high-quality image that represents the message of the post, rather than multiple images. There might be situations where you want to upload an album, but this is unlikely to happen more than once a month.

Good Image Use



Bad Image Use



Quick tips to take better photos on smartphones:

1. Keep in mind the “rule of thirds”. This is a shorthand professional photographers use to take good photos. Imagine the scene you are about to take is a grid with three equally spaced out horizontal and vertical lines. To take a great photo, place the most interesting subject in the scene on one of these lines. See right for an example from Wikipedia Commons, photo credit: Chaky.



2. If you are at an event, instead of just taking a photo of the scenery, consider what the most interesting and unique thing happening at the event is. Focus in on that. Ask yourself: what makes this event different? What would you tell a friend about?
3. The most captivating photos tend to have high brightness and contrast. Play around with your phone's setting to increase brightness and contrast.
4. If there are any leading lines in the scene, make sure they are parallel to the borders of the image.
5. Before you take a photo, figure out where the main source of light is. Make sure the subject is not blocking the light, but is facing the light.
6. After you have the right photo, alter your own phone's brightness to see if it looks as good at medium brightness.
7. It is easier to take a good photograph when the background is simple.

Correct dimensions

Each social media platform has its own optimal image dimensions. For your images to look the best, it is a good idea to follow these dimensions to optimize how your images appear on all devices.

Alt text and searchability

There are two drawbacks to using images in social media, both fixed by something called 'alt text'.

The main drawback is that images leave out people with visual impairments, especially if they are the the most interesting part of the post. The second drawback is that photos are not visible to search, meaning you are missing out on people finding your content via a search engine.

Alt text refers to text that is associated with an image in its HTML code. It makes it accessible to screen readers for people who have visual impairments, and it makes it accessible to search engines which can drive more traffic to your posts. To learn more, see the section on Accessibility.

Video

You don't need to have extensive video experience to use video for social media. The most important rule? Keep your hands steady. Here are some tips:

-  Keep videos short. There's rarely a reason to have a video longer than a minute on social media, unless you are creating a professional production.
-  Something attention grabbing has to happen in the first few seconds to retain an audience.
-  Stick to one key message or point in the video.
-  As with all posts, ask yourself why someone will want to watch or share this video.
-  Where possible, upload videos to each platform natively so that they autoplay. Do not post a YouTube link on Facebook, for example.
-  Include subtitles in all your videos for more views, and for accessibility. 85% of videos are watched without sound.
-  Seriously, keep your hands steady, and consider investing in a mobile grip.

Live Video

With the advent of Periscope and Facebook Live, live video is having a moment. Some tips:

-  Choose what you plan to broadcast live carefully. Even though an event might be interesting, it might not lend itself to a live broadcast. Some things to consider:
 - Does the location have good lighting?
 - Will the viewers be able to hear what is happening?
 - What will the viewers get to learn by watching this? What will they enjoy?
 - Is there anything visually interesting happening that will draw viewers?
 - Will there be good Wi-Fi or connection throughout this broadcast?
-  Promote that you are going to go live ahead of time to maximize the audience.

-  Come up with a vague script in your head for how the broadcast should go.
-  If appropriate, you might want to come up with a list of event-specific factoids to share in quiet moments.
-  If you plan on interviewing anyone, prep them ahead of time to avoid on-air embarrassment.
-  Pre-write the description that will be posted along with the video and make sure it grabs viewers' attention.
-  Most social media platforms allow viewers to comment in real time. Encourage participation by responding to viewers by name.

Q&A

You can host Q&As on any social media platform. They offer a great way to engage with your audience.

Benefits of two-way chats

- Provides a service to New Yorkers
- Creates a structured setting to ask/answer questions
- Gives an opportunity to explore a particular issue

While the benefits are nothing to scoff at, there is a risk involved with Q&As. Like in press conferences, you may get questions that are difficult to answer. Don't do a Q&A if you are not prepared to answer the unflattering questions. As a note, being seen as answering difficult questions is actually a great sign of transparency and confidence, so press & communications departments should not worry if a tough question is in itself bad optics.

How to set up a Q&A

- First, let MODS know so we can help promote and offer guidance!
- Reach out to partners to help promote the chat and make it successful.
- Anticipate the questions you might get and prep pre-drafted responses.
- Prepare extra written and visual content during quiet moments.
- If you are using Twitter, create a special hashtag for the Q&A.
- Promote the Q&A as lasting only a half hour. If people keep asking questions, you can just keep it going!

As a note, being seen as answering difficult questions is actually a great sign of transparency and confidence, so press & comms departments should not worry that a tough question is in itself bad optics.

How to execute a Q&A

- Get everyone in one room (order pizza).
- Only one person runs the Twitter chat, while helpers funnel questions to them.
- Be judicious about which questions you answer.
- On Twitter, quote the question and then offer the answer so viewers can see the whole exchange.

Accessibility

An accessible experience is one that everyone can share, including people with disabilities. NYC should set the standard for accessible social media. These tips are borrowed from guidance from the Mayor's Office of People with Disabilities.

People with disabilities use assistive technology to interact with computers, tablets and smartphones. A person from the blind community can use a screen reader to read the contents of the screen out loud. If we do not make our content compatible with screen readers, then that person is less likely to get anything meaningful from our websites or social media accounts.

You can make social media accessible by:

- Including a written description for all images
- Including audio description and captioning for videos

Questions to ask yourself when describing an image:

- Where was this photo taken?
- Who is in the photo? If their identity is integral to the purpose of the photo then it should be included.
- What are they doing?
- What is the significance of this photo? Ask yourself "what's the point?" or "Why am I posting this?"

Different platforms have different mechanisms for including image descriptions.

Hootsuite

Hootsuite is the City's social media content management system. All scheduled posts need to be posted through Hootsuite, so that they can be easily cancelled in an emergency.

Hootsuite allows you to schedule content on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn. It also allows you to set reminders for Instagram.

Hootsuite has all the capabilities of native posting except:

- Alt text
- Tagging Facebook images before posting
- Tagging Twitter images before posting

Below are some features of Hootsuite that you should take advantage of:

- Customizable livestreams
- Free analytics reports
- Tagging campaigns with keywords and then tracking success
- Apps that can draw content from Google drives, can insert Weibo feeds, and more.

If you have any problems with Hootsuite, please use their extremely useful Live Chat option before contacting MODS.

Networks

The above best practices apply to every network, but below are some network-specific tips.

Twitter

Twitter is a social media network that allows you to post 140-character chunks of content. This network is well suited for instant news updates and other timely content. For this reason, it is highly favored by journalists. Your followers will get to see your posts in real time. If someone retweets you, it will be visible to all of their followers. Of course, that is easier said than done.

Below are some things to keep in mind:

General Best Practices

- Keep tweets concise, and don't try to say too much in one post.
- Use videos, which can increase engagement up to 300% according to Twitter.
- Engage with the community! Rather than just disseminating content, actively engage with other Twitter accounts.
- Use the trending dashboard to your advantage by participating in relevant trending hashtags.

Setting up your profile checklist:

- High-resolution header image
- Profile image that includes the logo
- Link to Social Media User Policy in the bio
- Information about what the agency does in the bio
- Link to agency's main website
- Pinned tweet with the most important information new visitors should see

Posting timing & volume

Because posts appear in newsfeeds as they are posted, ideally you want to post three to five times a day. If your office does not have that kind of bandwidth, just make sure you are posting regularly.

The best times to post are during morning rush hour, lunchtime, and post-work rush hour. Keep in mind, these times can change based on your audience.

On the other end of this, don't post too many tweets right after the other, as that can result in people unfollowing the account.

Visuals

How a post looks is as important as what it says. Don't use a lot of hashtags/links/handles next to each other. Instead, use the 'Return' key liberally to space out hashtags.



Hashtags

When to use hashtags:

- To add commentary to an already popular, trending, and specific hashtag. Tweets that include a hashtag are 33% more likely to be retweeted.
- When there is a hashtag around a specific singular event.

When not to use hashtags:

- For vague subject areas. E.g.: #Queens, #MentalHealth, #SubstanceAbuse
- When the tweet is already loaded with a lot of hyperlinked text, like links, mentions, and other hashtags. Tweets with only one hashtag are 69% more likely to get retweets than those with two or more.

Facebook

Facebook is the largest social media network, connecting more than a billion people. Facebook profiles are generally connected to real people. An algorithm decides which content makes it to people's social media feeds. Most posts only reach around 10% of fans. This algorithm changes frequently.

Currently, it seems to be favoring posting news, comments over likes, tagging other relevant pages, creating events, link-shares (the auto-populated link box) and video content. On the other hand, photos for every post, like-bait, sales language, and frequently circulated content is unfavored.

General Best Practices

- While Facebook does not have a character limit, people have an attention limit, so keep posts to a few sentences. Posts with less than 250 characters get 60% more engagement on average.
- Engage with the comments you get, especially the positive ones. This will cause those interactions to be higher up on your comment list.
- Articles tend to do very well on Facebook. Fun fact: a plurality of Americans report getting their news from Facebook rather than other places.
- On the other hand, Facebook's algorithm consistently diminishes the reach of links to competitors (like YouTube) and non-news sites, including NYC.gov.
- Additionally, the algorithm limits the reach of a link that was posted in a previous post, so you should only link to a specific news article once.
- Seriously consider paying for sponsored content, which can take advantage of Facebook's hyper-specific targeting.
- Facebook's algorithm will always favor whatever new product the company is rolling out. For example, the latest favored post is a Live Video. Before that it was the Q&A.
- Consider adding milestones when your agency has an anniversary, or accomplishes a huge goal. People love to engage with milestones on Facebook.

Setting up your profile checklist:

- High-resolution header image
- Profile image that includes the logo
- Link to Social Media User Policy in the bio
- Information about what the agency does in the bio
- Link to the main website
- Filled out info sections
- Have a call to action, even it is signing up a newsletter
- Turn on "Similar Page Suggestions" to increase likes by going to Settings, and then Similar Page Suggestions.

Posting timing & volume:

Because posts appear in newsfeeds based on the algorithm, timing is less critical than on Twitter and Instagram. However, to increase your odds of pleasing the algorithm it helps to post right before lunch hour and right before 5pm.

Leave plenty of time between posts, because the algorithm is unlikely to want to make two posts trend from the same page.

Visuals:

As we said above, how a post looks is as important as what it says. For Facebook, this means short, pithy paragraphs and high-resolution photos with each post.

Keep in mind:

- Facebook analyzes images, and if there is too much text WITHIN the image, it will limit its reach.
- When you insert an article, a leading image pops up. If the image is grainy, you can always update one of your own.
- Do not leave the link in the post. Once you've inserted a link, the preview will populate and you can delete the link. There, so much neater!

FB Video:

Facebook is where videos should live if you want them to go far. Couple of things to keep in mind:

- Always upload HD quality video. On iPhones, make sure that under Upload HD is clicked on under Settings > FB.
- 85% of videos are watched without sound. Make sure the video is understandable without audio. This means including subtitles and shooting vibrant scenes.
- Make sure that the first few seconds are captivating.
- Make sure everything is well lit, and comprehensible on a small-screen.

FB Live:

Currently, FB Live is being heavily promoted by the algorithm, so it will do well. There are a couple of things to keep in mind when using it:

- If it's important to hear people speaking, make sure they can clearly be heard by doing a test run first.
- Try to avoid using a handheld camera.
- Try to make sure every image is interesting, so that at any point in the filming, a user would be motivated to watch.
- Avoid shooting things like meetings, talks, and conversations, which tend not to do well on FB Live. Focus on events that have strong visual interest or document breaking news with widespread appeal.

Mayor's Office of Digital Strategy

We love to help. We can:

- Help brainstorm solutions to challenges your agency is experiencing
- Foster connections with other agencies and outside partners
- Communicate with social media networks if an issue needs to be elevated
- Advocate on your behalf to higher-ups

Contact us at social@digital.nyc.gov.

Useful links

Social Media Network Blogs & Newsrooms

Twitter - blog.twitter.com

Facebook - newsroom.fb.com

Instagram - blog.instagram.com

Social Media News & Tips Sites

Forbes - forbes.com/social-media/#4973d4c016bd

Mashable - mashable.com/category/social-media/

Digital Trends - digitaltrends.com/social-media/

Social Media Today - socialmediatoday.com

Entrepreneur - entrepreneur.com/topic/social-media

NBC News - nbcnews.com/tech/social-media

The Telegraph - telegraph.co.uk/social-media

AdWeek - adweek.com/socialtimes

Social Media Today - socialmediatoday.com

Photo Editing Software

Pixlr - pixlr.com/editor

GIMP - gimp.org

Canva - canva.com

befunky - befunky.com/features/graphic-designer

Noun Project (free icons) - thenounproject.com

Free Listening Software

socialmention - socialmention.com

whos talkin - whostalkin.com

Iconosquare - pro.iconosquare.com

Hashtagify - Hashtagify.me

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