
4.1 Social Networks

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Synopsis: Social media guidelines for social networks for State of Georgia sites.

4.1.0 Introduction

Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn) use individual user profiles to connect people. These online communities are typically free, and provide each individual and company with its own "page" to create a profile of data and interests.

Government agencies can make use of social networks to engage dialogue with other entities and individuals. By creating a profile, agencies can post updates and photos, and interact with constituents through polls, comments, and discussion boards.

There are many social networking platforms available, and in the social networking landscape, platform popularity can wax and wane fairly quickly. At the time of this writing, Facebook is the most widely used social networking platform in North America, while LinkedIn is popular for professional networking. While these guidelines may specifically reference these platforms based on their popularity, the guidelines broadly apply to any relevant social networking website.

4.1.1 Benefits of Social Networking

- Connects people globally
- Creates public communities
- Distributes public announcements in a widely used venue
- Grows opportunities for viral engagement - people in your network can help you share your message.

4.1.2 When to Launch a Social Network

Social networks require consistency and strategy to maintain. Before launching your presence on a network, ask these questions:

- What are my agency's goals? How will this social network support those goals and improve agency communications?
- Who is my audience? Am I likely to find my audience on this network? If not, will I develop a new audience?
- What type of content will my audience want to see on this network?
- Do I have the resources to continue engaging this network going forward?

4.1.3 Strategies for an Agency Social Network Page

- **Read the social network's policies** and guidelines, and make sure they don't conflict with your agency's policies.
- **Set up your presence on the site with an entity page**, not as an individual profile. (e.g. with a Facebook Page rather than a user Profile)
- **Create one account for your agency**, and highlight any initiatives or services from separate page tabs. Do not create a separate account for each initiative or subgroup.
- **Select Social Media Managers** who will monitor and update your page, and **set regular meetings** with them to review what's working on the platform and what's not.
- **Write a policy** to guide how your Social Media Managers should interact with and comment on your agency's page. Make sure all managers understand what is expected.
- Call your Social Media Managers together, give yourselves 10 minutes on the clock, and **brainstorm a list of relevant topics** to post on the social platform.
- Consider the **frequency of page updates**. If you'll be launching a Facebook page, how many posts will you share each day?
- Using your list of topics and posting frequency, **create an editorial calendar**. This will help keep your social media managers organized.
- Determine how you will **measure success** from your page, either from Page statistics within the network, increased website hits, customer interaction, etc.
- If you decide to allow users to post on your wall, **determine your policy on comments**, and assign a moderator to deal with inappropriate comments. (See 4.1.4 "Managing Comments" in the Blogs section for more tips on commenting policies).

Are You Ready?

If, after careful analysis and planning, you find that your agency does not have the resources to plan and maintain an active social networking strategy, it would be wise to wait until you are better prepared.

4.1.4 Authentication For Social Network Pages

- Link to your .gov site in the Info tab.
- Link to your social networking page from your .gov site.
- Use your official logo or trademark as your profile photo.
- Be assertive about claiming your authenticity by clearly stating that your social media outlet is official in the Introductory paragraph.

4.2.4 Examples

- [Georgia Department of Agriculture \(Georgia Grown\) on Facebook](#) [1]
- [Georgia Department of Labor on Facebook](#) [2]
- [Environmental Protection Agency on Facebook](#) [3]
- [Georgia Forestry Commission on Facebook](#) [4]

4.2.5 References

- [DigitalGov's Social Media Registry](#) [5]