



Trends in Social Media

Dear Reader:

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We hope this information will be useful to you; reference to it will assist you with many of the questions that will arise in your tenure with municipal government. However, the *Tennessee Code Annotated* and other relevant laws or regulations should always be consulted before any action is taken based upon the contents of this document.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this information or any other MTAS website material.

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Trends in Social Media

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The trends in social media include a continued spread across demographics, some consolidation of services, as well as the number of users continuing to rise. Social media continues to add users with greater diversity, especially across age and income demographics. As the numbers have increased this has helped the user base grow more representative of the broader population. Young adults were the earliest adopters of social media but usage by older adults has increased in recent years.[5] Some consolidation has occurred among the different tools. Facebook acquired Instagram in the spring of 2012 for \$1 billion dollars in cash and stock.[6] Facebook has continued to operate Instagram as a separate entity allowing the tools to integrate with one another. In the United States, Facebook is by far the most popular social media site. LinkedIn, Pinterest, Instagram, and Twitter are all very close in the rankings with one another. However, the most significant change for users has come in the form of mobile use. Over the last few years it has become clear that the future of social networking is via mobile devices. Smart phones, iPads, iPods, tablets and other mobile devices make connecting with one another much more accessible than being on a desktop computer tethered to a desk.

The number of registered users for each service has continued to climb. Facebook reports 2.2 billion, YouTube has 1.9 billion, Instagram has 1 billion, LinkedIn has 562 million, Twitter has 336 million, and Snapchat has 255 million active users.[7]

The following sections will explore a few popular social media tools but is not all inclusive, as new tools are emerging daily. Before deciding which social media tool will be of most use to your city, you will need to do some research about the demographics in your community. Since the city's goal is to reach as many citizens in the city as possible, it is important to know which social media platforms citizens are using. After your city implements the use of social media, you will want to stay involved in the evolution of social media and continuously look for new ways of doing business through social media, while at the same time remaining cognizant of and being vigilant about not falling into the many pitfalls that come along with the use of social media.

[5] <http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheet/social-media/> [1]

[6] http://dealbook.nytimes.com/2012/04/09/facebook-buys-instagram-for-1-billion/?_r=0 [2]

[7] <http://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/>

[3] & <https://www.linkedin.com/about-us> [4]

Facebook

Reference Number: MTAS-2071

Facebook is a social media site that was started by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004.[8] It was launched at Harvard University. Facebook allowed students to create a profile containing personal information and then find other students in an online location. It started at a single university and then spread to other US colleges and universities. US high school students were the next target audience. Facebook then began spreading worldwide in the education market. In September 2006, the network extended beyond educational institutions to anyone with a registered email address.[9] The founder Mark Zuckerberg is the chairman and CEO for Facebook.[10] He has turned down very lucrative offers from companies wanting to purchase Facebook and continues to maintain a hands-on approach with the company.

Facebook describes itself as the place for people to share and discover.[11] If you want to share the message of your city with as many users as possible, then Facebook is a good place to start. It is a great marketing and communication tool. Facebook covers the widest number of users across all demographic areas, including age, ethnicity, income, education, etc.[12] Facebook also allows you to post most types of information, including text, pictures, short videos, and links to web sites. While Facebook allows you to post lengthy text, it is best to keep your message short and eye-catching. When using any of the social media tools, it is important to keep your post fresh and up-to-date in order to drive activity to your page.

To create a page for your organization, select the “create a page” option. Click the "Get Started" button under "Business or Brand" which will activate the "Name your Page" and "Add a category to describe your Page" fields. After naming the page, start typing "Government" in the category field. Next select "Government Organization" as your category unless one of the other government options is a better fit for the Facebook Page you are creating. This option will allow you to be under the “Amended Pages Terms [5]” for State and Local Governments.[13] The National Association of State Chief Information Officers (NASCIO) (<http://www.nascio.org> [6]) worked with Facebook in order to get terms that would work better for local and state governments. This option will also give you the benefit of using the publishing tools.

The most important thing to remember when creating the page is to have more than one administrator. In case something happens to one of the page administrators, the other can still perform as the admin for the page. Page roles will allow you to assign users as Admin, Editor, Moderator, Advertiser, or Analyst. The help file in Facebook [7] details what tasks each role is able to perform.

Each individual within your organization who has rights to make changes on the page must first have his/her own individual page and then must be given access to the organization's page and assigned a role. The person who first creates the page will automatically be given the Admin role.

[8] https://www.facebook.com/facebook/info?tab=page_info [8]

[9] <http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2007/jul/25/media.newmedia> [9]

[10] <https://investor.fb.com/corporate-governance/?section=board> [10]

[11] https://www.facebook.com/facebook/info?tab=page_info [8]

[12] <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/01/09/demographics-of-key-social-networking-platforms-2/> [11]

[13] https://www.facebook.com/terms_pages_gov.php [5]

Twitter

Reference Number: MTAS-2072

Twitter is an online social networking service that allows users to send and read short 280-character messages called Tweets.[14] People who use Twitter want to consume information quickly and to stay informed. The information you see on your timeline page/feed comes from other accounts that you follow. Following someone on Twitter means you are subscribing to their tweets and when they tweet something you will see it on your home tab. Essentially, you search for and look for feeds that contain information you want. These other pages could be people, businesses, organizations, news outlets, or other accounts you find interesting. A tweet can contain text, links or a picture. Tweets typically contain small text bites with a link that sends you somewhere else to get additional information, much like an electronic billboard. A successful Twitter administrator is someone who is creative and passionate about getting the word out or circulating the message you want to distribute. Twitter accounts must be fresh and active to engage your audience and to attract new readers.

Twitter has different standards and rules and you should read through them prior to creating an account. Here is a link to Twitter policies and guidelines: https://support.twitter.com/categories/56#category_237 [12].

Twitter is always evolving. Twitter users have found creative ways to shorten tweets and to help people follow them or to easily locate a topic of interest. An example is placing the hashtag symbol (#) before a relevant phrase or keyword within your tweet. Twitter users were the first to use the hashtag, which has now been incorporated into Facebook and other social media tools. When the subject of a hashtag becomes really popular, those tweets are identified as "Trending Topics."

The hashtag of a Twitter post should identify the topic of your tweet to help others find your topic through a search. A city can search a hashtag to find out what topics people in the community are talking about or searching for information on. Keep in mind that you do not have exclusive rights to a hashtag, you should never use too many hashtags (best practice is no more than two), and whatever hashtag you are using should be relevant to your tweet.

In addition to tweets, Twitter allows subscribers to send direct messages. When you follow someone on Twitter, you will see their tweets on your home tab. That person is also able to send you a direct message. Your followers are the people who receive your tweets and they can send you direct messages.

Direct messages are similar to emails or group conversations that are only sent to and received by select individuals, whereas a tweet is information and can be seen by anyone worldwide in a matter of seconds. Direct messages are, by default, only allowed to and from your followers. However, there is a setting you can turn on that allows anyone to direct message you.

[14] <https://support.twitter.com/articles/215585> [13]

Instagram

Reference Number: MTAS-1756

Instagram is an online social media networking service that allows individuals a place to share pictures and short videos. You are able to tag other users, apply filters and hashtags. People who follow you are allowed to like the content and comment on it. Like Twitter, Instagram has a system of Followers and Following options. You can make your account public or private. If you make your account private, then only the people you allow to follow you will see your content. Lots of Twitter users also have Instagram accounts and use it as the photo/video repository for their Twitter accounts. This is partly because Twitter initially allowed only text in tweets. Since Twitter now allows photos, using an Instagram account as a Twitter repository is a matter of personal preference.

LinkedIn

Reference Number: MTAS-2073

LinkedIn is an online social media networking service designed to connect professionals. Some unique features of LinkedIn are that it can be used as a recruiting tool, a marketing tool, or a sales tool.

Microsoft completed its acquisition of LinkedIn in December 2016.^[15] When you create your presence on LinkedIn, you have two options: creating a Company page or a Group page. The person tasked with creating and managing either type page must create a personal LinkedIn user account and complete the profile for that user. The Company page has additional requirements that must be met before the page becomes active. The personal profile must be at least 7 days old and have a profile strength of intermediate or higher. The person in your municipality tasked with creating the Company page will need to make several connections to other users on his/her personal profile, must be a current company employee with his/her current position listed in the experience section, and the municipality's email address must be added to the page and then confirmed by LinkedIn. Finally the municipality's email domain must be unique to the municipality.^[16] If you are not able to meet all of the criteria required to establish a Company page, you can create a Group page instead. With a Group page, you can choose to make it an open group or a members-only group. Whether you create a Company page or a Group page, set more than one person as the administrator in order to have a backup for administrative duties for the page.

[15] <https://about.linkedin.com/> [14]

[16] https://help.linkedin.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/1594/related/1 [15]

Links:

[1] <http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheet/social-media/>

[2] http://dealbook.nytimes.com/2012/04/09/facebook-buys-instagram-for-1-billion/?_r=0

[3] <http://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/>

[4] <https://www.linkedin.com/about-us>

- [5] https://www.facebook.com/terms_pages_gov.php
- [6] <http://www.nascio.org>
- [7] <http://www.facebook.com/help/289207354498410>
- [8] https://www.facebook.com/facebook/info?tab=page_info
- [9] <http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2007/jul/25/media.newmedia>
- [10] <https://investor.fb.com/corporate-governance/?section=board>
- [11] <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/01/09/demographics-of-key-social-networking-platforms-2/>
- [12] https://support.twitter.com/categories/56#category_237
- [13] <https://support.twitter.com/articles/215585>
- [14] <https://about.linkedin.com/>
- [15] https://help.linkedin.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/1594/related/1

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