



Social media is a category of Internet-based resources that integrate user-generated content and user participation. This includes social networking sites (Facebook, LinkedIn), microblogging sites (Twitter), photo- and video-sharing sites (Flickr, YouTube), wikis (Wikipedia), blogs, and virtual worlds (Second Life).

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LAW ENFORCEMENT EXECUTIVES' SOCIAL MEDIA TOP TEN

Social media is taking the world by storm. It seems as though everyone is using social media to communicate and share information. So what does this mean for law enforcement? With so much information available, it may seem overwhelming to venture into the social media arena. It is necessary, however, for law enforcement executives to be aware of what social media is, how it works, and how it can affect their agency and their community.

Below are the top 10 things every law enforcement executive should know about social media.

1. This is not a fad. Social media is becoming a norm in the way people and organizations communicate and interact. Many thought the telephone and the Internet were just passing trends, but both have proven to be lasting realities; the same may be true of social media.
2. Your officers are already using social media. More and more people are using social media and this means your officers are using these tools as well. It is important to encourage responsible use to maintain officer safety and department integrity. It is beneficial not only to have a social media policy but also to educate officers on your agency's expectations.
3. Set goals. Determine what you want to achieve before you begin. Having a strategy, especially one put to paper, will help your agency make the most out of its social media endeavor. Knowing what you want to accomplish will help you pick the right social media tools and determine what you will measure to determine success in the long run.
4. It's all about engagement. That means two-way communication between your agency and the community. Open the paths of communication and you may be pleasantly surprised at the feedback you receive.
5. Take your time. There are many ways social media can be used and there is nothing wrong with starting small and simple and working your way up to a more substantial presence.
6. Integrate your tools. For example, you can post something on YouTube and have it link to your Twitter and Facebook accounts. This doesn't mean you need to post the exact same thing to every site, but feel free to use these integration features to advertise your new content to multiple audiences.
7. Social media is not the be-all and end-all. Social media should be only a portion of your overall communications strategy. Consider social media just another tool to be used for communication, outreach, and other agency operations.
8. It's what you want it to be. Social media is scalable and can easily be tailored to meet the needs of your agency and your community. There is no right or wrong way to use social media, as long as you have specific goals and are using these tools to meet those goals.
9. There is a cost. Most social media tools are free to use, but their implementation and maintenance will require department resources such as personnel time. Social media may increase efficiency and allow you to do more with less, but it is important to determine what resources you will dedicate to the development and maintenance of these sites.
10. You need not reinvent the wheel. Other law enforcement agencies are already using social media and making it work for their department. Research agencies that are similar in size or location to see what they are doing and how you could incorporate their ideas to meet your agency's goals.

The IACP Center for Social Media provides law enforcement personnel with tools and resources to get started and maintain a social media presence for their agency. The site contains overviews of the various social media platforms, a model policy, step by step tutorials and a directory of over two thousand law enforcement agencies using social media tools in their agency.