

Ready, set, go.

Creating an engaging social media presence is about more than tools



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Introduction

Law Enforcement gets it. According to the 2012 IACP Social Media survey, 94% of law enforcement organizations have started using social media.

We have all heard how. Facebook postings can provide investigative leads, Twitter can help share real-time information, and blogs can share important messages with the community but are tools the right place to start?

Findings from the same IACP survey found that the majority of law enforcement organizations using social media follow this approach: open an account(s), spend 1-5 hours a week experimenting, hope to see results. This "tool first" mindset consequently leads to frustrating experiences, delayed benefits, and strained resources. There is a better way to approach social media. Spoiler Alert! Choosing the right social media tool should be the last decision your organization makes.

This guide, and the accompanying "pulse check," steps back from focusing on social media tools and tactics. It provides law enforcement organizations, irrespective of size or resources, a path for how and where to begin or enhance social media activities.

Putting Together a Social Media Presence

A social media program should begin with asking a series of foundational questions:

- What do you want to accomplish through social media?
- Who needs to be involved in planning and executing social media activities?
- How can social media help accomplish organizational goals?

Figure 1. Developing a Social Media Strategy



Ready

What goals are we trying to achieve and how can social media help?

This step is important and often skipped! Start by identifying issues and defining goals for your social media program. For example, suppose that an issue for your organization is that your citizens do not fully understand the service law enforcement provides for the community. Determine how social media could be used to help change this perception and how this could impact law enforcement efforts. Articulate what success looks like, and tie a metric to each goal where possible. A simple place to start is with the number of comments/responses you get per week. The output of this step is a social media vision and goals document that should be shared with internal stakeholders to gain their support and participation. Need some ideas on goals to get started? Check out the Accenture Social Media Handbook at www.accenture.com/microsites/social-media-management.

"Don't be put off by negative comments... The community will embrace you trying social media. They will support you."

Dionne Waugh, Richmond PD

Set

Whose internal support do we need? What resources? How will we operate?

An effective social media program requires dedicated time and personnel. These can be attained by sharing the vision and goals with key stakeholders, thereby showing the expected benefits of investing in social media.

Also, consider the processes and policies that may need to be defined in order to provide guidance on how social media activities will operate within the organization. Who will be allowed to post? Who will be reviewing comments? The output of this step is agreement of how social media will operate within your organization and the right level of support and resources dedicated to the program.

Go

How do we connect with our target audience?

We are almost there! Next, determine who your target audience is, and what type of information they would like to receive or provide via social media. Start by answering these questions: How and where does your target audience like to engage? What social media tools do most of them use? When do they like to get information (real time, historical, both)? You should not try to answer these questions in a vacuum – go out and ask your audience about their preferences.

Next, determine the message content and the cadence. What will get the best reactions? Instead of simply posting your daily activities, enrich your messages. Utilize photos, videos, and challenges. Be creative. Social media is about having an ongoing dialogue. Be prepared with ideas for your first few messages and postings before you start. See what others in the law enforcement community are doing at www.iacpsocialmedia.org.

Time to pick a tool. If you are new to social media, start small by focusing on the one tool you believe will best connect with your audience and meet your social media goals. As you build your social media presence you can add different tools to meet the needs of additional demographics groups. Each tool has unique benefits, requirements. To see social media tool profiles, check out www.iacpsocialmedia.org/technologies.aspx.

"Address all comments and don't leave things unsaid. Social media is a two-way conversation."

Billy Grogan, Dunwoody PD

Evaluate & Refresh

How do we know if we're doing it right?

A social media strategy should be evaluated and refreshed regularly. If you take the time to develop a strategy with goals and objectives, it is easier to understand whether or not initiatives are meeting their intended outcomes. You can follow the same steps above whenever you feel a change is needed.

Want to learn more? First, take the social media "pulse" survey to identify specific actions you can take today to enhance your social media program. Second, participate in webinars IACP and Accenture will be hosting in fall 2013 on how organizations can improve their social media program. Details will be shared with IACP membership once scheduled.

Check Your Pulse

Question 1

Has your organization identified social media opportunities to address?

Answer Choices:

- 1. We do not know how social media can benefit us.
- 2. We have brainstormed a few ideas on the benefits of social media.
- 3. We have defined how social media can benefit us.

Question 2

Does your organization have a plan in place describing how it intends to use social media?

Answer Choices:

- 1. We do not have a plan in place.
- 2. We have a few ideas written down.
- 3. We have a well-defined plan.

Question 3

Do you feel like the right resources (people, time, budget, etc.) have been allocated to starting and maintaining social media activities?

Answer Choices:

- 1. We have zero resources identified or committed.
- 2. We have some resources identified and committed.
- 3. We have the right resources identified and committed.

Question 4

Has your organization documented a process and policy for how dedicated personnel will use social media?

Answer Choices:

- 1. We do not have any written processes or policies.
- 2. Some processes and policies have been written.
- 3. Clear processes and policies have been written and communicated.

Question 5

Has your organization identified and engaged stakeholders (e.g., citizens, other first responders, law enforcement partners) it wants to target through social media?

Answer Choices:

- 1. We have not spoken with any stakeholders.
- 2. We have spoken with some stakeholders about their social media needs and priorities.
- 3. We have partnered with stakeholders about their social media needs and priorities.

Question 6

Has your organization defined metrics to evaluate the effectiveness of social media activities?

Answer Choices:

- 1. We are not sure what we want from social media.
- 2. We have some metrics but do not collect data on our plan.
- 3. We have clear metrics and collect data on our plan.

Question 7

Is your organization satisfied with the value social media has delivered?

Answer Choices:

- 1. We are not using social media.
- 2. We are not sure of the value of our social media actions.
- 3. Social media activities are meeting our goals and expectations.

Question 8

How would you rate your organization's understanding of social media tools (e.g., Facebook, Twitter)?

Answer Choices:

- 1. Minimal personnel have an understanding of social media and its value.
- 2. Select personnel have an understanding of social media and its value.
- 3. Our organization has a good understanding of social media and its value.

Question 9

Your organization's enthusiasm for social media can be best described as...

Answer Choices:

- 1. Our organization is hesitant to use social media.
- 2. Our organization is interested in using social media.
- 3. Our organization enjoys using social media.

Ready, set, go

Ready

If you answered mostly 1s, you are **"Ready"** to Plan Your Social Media Program. You have identified a need for social media. Below are some next steps to consider:

- Develop a prioritized list of current initiatives you believe social media can contribute to improving. When completing this list, refer to existing strategic plans and agency priorities.
- Create a list of stakeholders. Internal stakeholders are those who need to be engaged in the strategy to meet objectives. External stakeholders are your social media's target audience.
- Identify the resources needed to support your strategy.
- Gain leadership support

Set

If you answered mostly 2s, you are considered **"Set,"** for organization. You should:

- Analyze and engage your internal stakeholders. Explain their role as a contributor to provide insight on the social media strategy and establish a unified vision to determine each group's needs.
- Allocate your resources. Define the roles and responsibilities for the personnel implementing the strategy. Equip them with the skills and tools necessary to properly complete the job.
- Establish the processes to reach your goal(s). They should be detailed enough such that each activity is easily understood by those who will be doing it.

Go

If you answered mostly 3s, you are considered **"Go!"** This means that your organization has a well thought-out plan and the necessary resources for executing, or maintaining, a social media strategy. The below steps provide insight on what you can do to reach the next level:

- Choose your social media tool(s). Consider each tool's strengths and weaknesses, trends, and how the social media tool fits into your established processes. IACP has social media tool profiles that can provide valuable input to your decision.
- Develop content with strategy in mind. Each message released should have a purpose. Is the message attempting to evoke an action, or a feeling? It will take a consistent stream of messages to achieve your goals.
- Release your messages. Social media is a two-way street. Your organization should be interacting with your target audience in all law enforcement-related conversations, not just the ones you started. Set weekly goals on the number of social media posts to keep messaging consistent and effective.
- Use metrics to measure and report progress. Are results aligned to specific objectives?
- Optimize the processes. As processes are implemented, inefficiencies will be recognized (i.e., unnecessary or missing steps). Take an honest assessment of how your processes are working and see if there are areas that can be improved. Revise the processes accordingly.
- Stay updated with any changes made to your selected social media tool(s). Talk to other law enforcement organizations currently using the same social media tool and compare strategies. The Social Media Beat blog (<http://blog.iacpsocialmedia.org>) is a great resource to learn about and share ideas.

"Social media provides a mechanism to extend your reach into the community – it fosters and promotes one on one engagement."

Chris Hsiung, Mountain View PD

About IACP & Accenture

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) is a dynamic organization that serves as the professional voice of law enforcement. Building on our past success, the IACP addresses cutting-edge issues confronting law enforcement through advocacy, programs, and research, as well as training and other professional services. IACP is a comprehensive professional organization that supports the law enforcement leaders of today and develops the leaders of tomorrow. IACP launched its Center for Social Media in October 2010. The goal of the Center is to build the capacity of law enforcement to use social media to prevent and solve crimes, strengthen police-community relations, and enhance services. IACP's Center for Social Media serves as a clearinghouse of information and no-cost resources to help law enforcement personnel develop or enhance their agency's use of social media and integrate Web 2.0 tools into agency operations. For more information, please contact: socialmedia@theiacp.org.

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13-3284 / 11-7283