

Making the Most out of Social Media – Top Tips for Beginners

Starting out:

- Identify good practice and become familiar in effective social media – what works and what doesn't!
- Identify your audience and find out which platforms they use the most
- Look for good practice in the sector and learn from it
- Work with your marketing department – provide them with regular content for the College social media accounts if you don't want to set up your own departmental accounts
- Don't try to do everything at once – it's better to do one platform really well than three badly
- Link your social media activity into departmental plans – it will give it greater value
- Get the support of your manager and identify what they agree is and isn't acceptable social media use
- Write some brief guidelines (if there is more than one administrator) and ensure any other administrators understand them (social media needs to sound as if it is coming from one voice even if it is being supported by many voices!)
- Ensure consents are in place for any photography and video
- Be careful and respectful in your photography of students
- Use the settings on your social media accounts to disable phototagging, direct posting and offensive language.

Facebook tips:

- 'Like' other organisations which might be relevant to your department
- Write for your audience, not for everyone
- Use the events feature on Facebook as a calendar reminder function for your audience
- Space out your posts or time them to suit your audience using the scheduling button
- Use the Call-to-Action button to get users to email you/view a video/link to your webpages etc
- Use images, but only of students if relevant to the story and only if you have consent
- Try boosts and adverts to grow your Facebook community (you'll need a credit card!)
- Try live broadcasting when you're feeling brave enough!

- My personal Facebook rules: be authentic (share what you're genuinely excited about), be responsive (if someone comments positively on your posts, acknowledge this) and be consistent (regular posting means you are connecting with your audience and building credibility).

Twitter tips:

- To promote the growth of your Twitter community, follow strategically and regularly to improve interaction
- Don't follow students or staff who are tweeting in a personal capacity
- See if you can persuade your manager or other senior staff to set up their own 'corporate' Twitter account
- If you have a personal account and administer the department account as well, be crystal clear about which one you are posting to. This is surprisingly easy to confuse when you are tweeting on a mobile device – check before you tweet or prepare for potential embarrassment!
- Keep tweets short and sweet – you may have 140 characters but tweets under 120 characters are apparently more popular
- Use a more informal voice than other corporate communications, but be aware you are still the voice of the department
- Make sure you listen as well as speak – it's a two-way thing
- Keep content newsy, interesting and fun
- Make it visual; tweets with photos or videos receive three times more engagement than those without
- Use hashtags in your posts where relevant, but no more than two in any post
- Use links in your posts – preferably to your webpages, not to your Facebook Page
- Don't start a tweet with an @username (unless you mean to keep the conversation between just you and the user)
- Time your tweets to suit your audience, not you – or use a platform like Hootsuite or Tweetdeck to schedule your tweets
- Pin tweets which you want to have some longevity – such as great news or on Open Day – to the top of your profile
- Never click on dubious links in tweets sent to you– it's most likely to be a hacker
- Tweet consistently but not constantly.

YouTube tips:

- Consider getting one professional film made and using it on YouTube
- Recruit staff and students to help with developing other regular content for YouTube
- Remember that several two minute clips are better than one 15 minute video
- Link your YouTube channel into your webpages and all your social media activities
- Promote your YouTube presence on your usual marketing materials and as a link in your online communications
- Keep adding videos. If you want to have a successful channel, you will need a steady stream of content.

General:

- Remember that all social media platforms display slightly differently depending whether you are using a phone, tablet or desktop version. You need to be familiar with all versions and remember to always update to the latest version when using apps
- Encourage people to like, retweet and share your social media posts, and post social media share buttons on your department webpages
- Think about having the right **content** in your social media activity – think carefully about using the right ‘keywords’ and hashtags in your posts – it helps people find your social media accounts
- Link social media into your website, using icons AND links
- Promote social media in relevant digital communications and also in the full range of your printed materials
- Train your audience that social media is one of your ‘official’ methods of communication
- Use apps so you can monitor activity out of the office
- Use scheduling features to improve your time management
- Monitor social growth and ‘mentions’
- As your confidence grows, try other forms of social media
- Seek out and share good practice – social media is constantly changing and there is always more to learn!