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# #SocialMediaStrategy for the Massachusetts Municipal Councillors' Association

Thursday, September 17, 2020  
Presented by Derek Beckwith

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## Beckwith PR Group *Background*

- Campaign and communication strategic consultant
- 20+ years of experience in public affairs, politics, government, business and non-profit sectors
- International, national, state and local client base
- Develop and deliver measurable campaigns and programs
- In-house, agency and independent
- Former faculty member, Emerson College
- Specialties include media relations, social media, crisis communications

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## #SocialMedia *Today's Session*

- **PART 1. Why Social Media**
  - Valuable communications channel for municipalities, but if ignored or handled improperly, can easily become problematic
  - It's where your constituents are!
- **PART 2. Paying Attention to the Rules**
  - Keep separate council, campaign and personal accounts
  - Follow Public Meeting and Public Records protocols
- **PART 3. Take a Thoughtful Approach with Clear Objectives**
  - Keep separate council, campaign and personal accounts
- **PART 4. Social Media Best Practices**
  - Best practice advice and tips on how to avoid common mistakes and handle difficult situations
- **PART 5. Q&A/Discussion**

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## #SocialMediaStrategy

### Why Social Media?

- ▶ 98% of digital consumers use social media\*
- ▶ Majority access social platforms via computers
- ▶ But users are most likely to access social media via mobile devices
- ▶ Most popular social media channels:
  - ▶  YouTube
  - ▶  Facebook
  - ▶  Instagram
  - ▶  Twitter
  - ▶  Snapchat
- ▶ 82% YouTube    79% Facebook    50% Instagram    42% Twitter    42% Snapchat\*\*
- ▶ And don't forget LinkedIn... 50% of adults with college degrees can be found there

♦ \*2018 Statistics courtesy of GlobalWebIndex    \*\* Not a priority for municipalities

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## #SocialMediaStrategy

### Why Social Media?

- ▶ Why are your constituents on social media?
  - ▶ 40% - To be in the loop "stay in touch with what my friends are doing"
  - ▶ 40% - To be in the know "stay up-to-date with news and current events"
  - ▶ 37% - To be busy "fill up spare time"
  - ▶ 36% - To be entertained "find funny or entertaining content"
  - ▶ 33% - To entertain/inform "share photos or videos with others"
  - ▶ 33% - To connect "networking with other people"

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## #SocialMediaStrategy

### Why Social Media?

- ▶ Open and transparent
  - ▶ Excellent opportunity for councilors to build trust and a positive public perception of your work and services
- ▶ You can communicate directly with constituents to...
  - ▶ Inform
  - ▶ Engage
  - ▶ Connect residents/constituents to services
  - ▶ Announce new services
  - ▶ Celebrate accomplishments
  - ▶ Recognize neighborhood organizations, leaders
  - ▶ Important in crisis/critical situations (e.g. COVID, Emergency Services, etc.)
- ▶ Social media can help you meet core goals efficiently

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## #SocialMediaStrategy

### Paying Attention to the Rules

- **Keep separate council, campaign and personal accounts**
- **Be aware of your city's social media policies**
  - If your community does not have one - advocate for it
  - Read and keep MMA and other guidelines and resources (see Resource Guide on final slide)
- **Open Meeting Laws**
  - As a best practice, do not follow other councilors, like their posts, comment, etc.
  - Do not advocate positions or lobby for votes on any pending or potential council business on your councilor account
    - WRONG: The budget we're voting on tonight needs to be trimmed.
    - RIGHT: I encourage everyone to attend tonight's budget hearing; getting the budget right is vital to the future of our community.
    - WRONG: Tonight, we need to approve the proposed amendments to our affordable housing ordinance.
    - RIGHT: Affordable housing is important topic -- I hope all concerned attend tonight's virtual hearing (click here for info on how to attend!)

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## #SocialMediaStrategy

### Paying Attention to the Rules

- **Follow Public Record Protocols**
  - Regularly archive and save ALL activity on your councilor accounts
  - Do NOT delete posts, comments, etc. without saving them first
    - Facebook Example:
      - Go to "Settings"
      - Click on "Your Facebook Info"
      - Click on "Download Your Information"
      - You will receive a link from Facebook to download and save your information

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## #SocialMediaStrategy

### Thoughtful Approach

- **Things to Remember When Setting Up/Enhancing Your Program**
- **These are NOT your campaign accounts**
  - Beyond lobbying, you should NOT post about fundraisers, campaign events, yard sign availability, etc.
- **Create a Simple Matrix**
  - Create a YouTube Account for all your own videos and use those links when you post
  - LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram all have slightly different voices
- **Build a Calendar and stick to it**
- **Use a free/inexpensive service to schedule and manage your posts**
  - Hootsuite, Buffer, Sprout Social, ScheduGram, etc.
- **Track and Measure (Reach, Engagement, User Activity, and more)**

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## #SocialMediaStrategy

### Thoughtful Approach

- **Build Engagement with Compelling Content**
  - Be Authentic - Post with a purpose. Don't just say what you are doing, share why
  - Highlight Relationships - Use @ to tag friends, followers and influencers
  - Engage in Conversation - Don't just post, interact. Like, comment, share, retweet, reply (but not with other councilors)
  - Be Consistent - If it is worth doing, do it well and do it often
  - Mix it Up - Vary what you say and how you say it. Use short videos and high-quality pictures to draw the reader in
  - #Trending - use hashtags to connect your posts with similar content

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## #SocialMediaStrategy

### Thoughtful Approach

- **Handling the Positive and Negative**
  - Be Responsive - Acknowledge comments - reply to them, like them, encourage them
  - Be Respectful - Thank for input, encourage attendance
  - Be Attentive (aka 'Stuff Happens') - Respond appropriately
    - Hashtag Boomerang (#MyNYPD)
    - Fast Fingers (Austin misinterpreted post)
    - Silence Isn't Golden (CDC, WHO)

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## #SocialMediaStrategy

### Final Thoughts

- Social Media Directly Reaches Your Biggest Audiences Daily
- Amazing Opportunity for Transparency, Engagement and Building Positive Perception of Your City Government and Your Role
- Use a Strategic Approach
- You Can Win the Risk/Reward Equation

◆ *Wrap-Up Questions?*

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## #SocialMediaStrategy

### Resources

- Resources:
- MMA's Best Practices - Considering Social Media Policies in the Context of the Open Meeting and Public Records Law Social Media:  
[https://41841832vxdfrcc0jwd151e-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/mma\\_best\\_practices\\_vol4n04\\_bin2019.pdf](https://41841832vxdfrcc0jwd151e-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/mma_best_practices_vol4n04_bin2019.pdf)
- From the MMA's Municipal Advocate magazine, "To Tweet or Not to Tweet? Social Media, Public Records and the Open Meeting Law":  
[www.mma.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/mma\\_advocate\\_28-4\\_law\\_social\\_media.pdf](http://www.mma.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/mma_advocate_28-4_law_social_media.pdf)
- From KP Law, "The Opening Meeting Law and Social Media - Potential Pitfalls":  
[www.kplaw.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Open-Meeting-Law-and-Social-Media-Potential-Pitfalls.pdf](http://www.kplaw.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Open-Meeting-Law-and-Social-Media-Potential-Pitfalls.pdf)
- From the Attorney General's Office, Open Meeting Law Frequently Asked Questions:  
[www.mass.gov/frequently-asked-questions-about-the-open-meeting-law](http://www.mass.gov/frequently-asked-questions-about-the-open-meeting-law)
- Attorney General's Office Open Meeting Law Determinations Search:  
<http://mass.gov/onbisonline.com/Massago/1700PublicAccess2/GWL.htm>
- Secretary of State's Guide to the Massachusetts Public Records Law:  
[www.sec.state.ma.us/pre/orepdf/guide.pdf](http://www.sec.state.ma.us/pre/orepdf/guide.pdf)

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