Social Media User Guide

Northern Arizona University

Created by the Northern Arizona University Social Media Subcommittee, July 2011
**Getting Started**
Social media is a great way to broaden your ability to converse with new and existing audiences. Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Foursquare, Picasa, and Flickr offer a multitude of ways to interact with those inside and outside of the university. Northern Arizona University’s Social Media Subcommittee is providing this guide to help you determine if you should begin engaging through social media and how best to practice communication in this new and ever-changing realm.

**Social Media Checklist**
*Questions to answer before you launch a new social media account (for help in answering these questions, see the following pages)*

1. What is your goal? (circle one)
   a. Build awareness
   b. Create community/conversations
   c. Provide customer service
   d. Build loyalty
   e. Generate and circulate news and information

2. Who is your audience?

3. What is your current relationship with your audience? If you don’t have a relationship, how will they find out about you?

4. Why would your audience want to connect with you?

5. How will you engage with your audience?

6. How will you measure success?
   a.
   b.
   c.

7. Who will manage it and maintain your account?

8. What are your content sources and how often do you intend to update your account? (e.g. 3 times/week)?

9. Which social media outlet will help you accomplish your goals and reach your audience?

10. Is there an existing social media account at the university where you could distribute your information or establish a partnership in lieu of creating a new account?
Step One: determine whether social media is for you, and map out your plan

What are your goals?
Define your intentions, such as promoting awareness of your department or increasing attendance at events. You should have a clear idea of why you believe using social media can help you to achieve your goals. Because of the nature of social media, long-term goals often work better than short term goals: remember, a quiet social media account is often worse than no account at all.

Who do you want to reach?
Defining your audiences, such as prospective students, parents, alumni or staff, will help you determine appropriate content to engage in conversations and increase awareness of your department, group and the university.

What is your current relationship with your audience? How will they find out about you?
How will you reach that audience to get the word out about your new social media outlet? Establishing a YouTube channel, Facebook fan page or Twitter account requires effort, and you should plan for ways to engage with members of your intended audience. Contact other university social media administrators who are well-established to ask for their help in boosting your exposure through postings.

Why would your audience want to connect with you?
It is important to remember that successful social media communication is social. Even if you have objectives that you want to advance, it is important that audiences have compelling reasons to engage with your audience.

How will you use social media?
Unless you are a news outlet, such as Inside NAU which “pushes” relevant university news information to its audience, social media is best used for two-way communication. That includes posting 140-character messages on Twitter, sharing information on Facebook, creating photo galleries on Picasa or Flickr and loading quality digital video footage on YouTube. The important part about using any social media account is to interact with your audience. See the “Tips for use” section for more guidance.
**How will you measure success?**
Determine how your progress can be measured, such as the number of visits to your website or the number of attendees at a specific event. Explore the use of Google Analytics and other tools to help you quantify your progress. Because social media is constantly evolving, you will need to regularly evaluate your use of it and progress toward your goals. Allow your goals and strategies to evolve as well. As with any relationship, engaging with others via social media is an ongoing effort that requires nurturing and attention.

**Who will manage and maintain the content?**
Does the person designated to manage the account have the skills and time to regularly populate, maintain and monitor your social media presence? Do you have the appropriate resources to ensure your social media presence is dynamic, engaging, and social? Designate other team members for backup and contributions, and avoid relying solely on students. Be sure whoever posts on the account understands the responsibility involved with speaking on behalf of the university. Make sure the account is attached to a university email account, preferably a shared or department one (i.e. Marketing@nau.edu) so access can be reset or granted in the event the creator leaves or is unavailable.

**Do you have enough content to update it regularly?**
Remember, an infrequently updated social media account can be worse than having no presence at all. Rather than looking dynamic and social, you come across as boring and disinterested. So make sure that you have enough content (and content contributors) to stay up-to-date with your social media efforts. Determine your content capabilities. Will you post news stories? Where will that content come from? Will you share photos or video? How will quality content be generated, edited and loaded, and is it of a high enough quality or resolution? Make a list of the ways you want to communicate and what resources you need to accomplish it.

**Have you thought about which social media outlets to use?**
Have you researched what social media platform is best for you, given your goals and audiences? Facebook and Twitter offer different ways to engage, while YouTube, Picasa and Flickr feature multimedia content. Check out this description of social media outlets, courtesy of SlideShare.net. It will assist you in careful consideration of what social media outlets are most appropriate for you.

**Is social media for you?**
If you’ve been through the previous questions, and can answer with a resounding “yes,” you’re ready to move on to the next section. If you want to use social media but do not have resources, contact an administrator of an existing account and explore establishing a partnership.
If social media is for you, here are next steps to consider:

**Which social media are for you?**
Once you’ve defined your intended audience, you can determine which social medium or media will be the best way to reach it. For instance, if you’re trying to reach students, you should know that 29 percent of the 500 million plus Facebook users are between 18 and 25 years old, but the same age group makes up only 13 percent of 106 million Twitter users. Find out how your audience uses social media if you want them to engage with you. You may enhance your presence by creating, for example, a YouTube channel for video content and Picasa for photo galleries.

If you choose Facebook, decide whether you want a fan page or group page. Fan pages allow distinct URLs, cross promotion and also allow the administrator to access visitor statistics. These also show in the news feed of users, so they will see updates on their home screen. Fan pages also are searchable in engines like Google, driving the public to the page. Group pages are not searchable, updates may be sent via bulk email messages but do not show up in the home screen. Carefully consider which is more appropriate for your goal. For example, the College of Education would create a fan page whereas a student club might better benefit from a group page.

**How should I identify an NAU-related account/profile?**
Be sure to clearly identify yourself as related to NAU, while ensuring users won’t confuse it with the main university page. Begin your name with “Northern Arizona University” or “NAU” as your audience will start their search with those terms.

**How do I get placement on NAU’s social media directory?**
Adhere to the social media directory inclusion guidelines and submit your site to considered for inclusion.

**How will you get the word out about your new social media outlet?**
Establishing a YouTube channel, Facebook fan page or Twitter account requires effort, and you should anticipate how you will invite members of your intended audience. Contact other university social media administrators that are well-established to ask for their help in boosting your exposure through postings. Add your social media addresses to your university website, your email signature and any printed collateral.

**Remember to listen.**
Keep your fingers on the pulse of what others are saying in general and about your group or the
university. Listen to other “voices” of the university in social media and be open to asking for guidance or emulating the style of others.

Let’s work together.
One way that NAU’s social media “network” can collaborate is by sharing content that has already been created by an official university source, such as Inside NAU, or marketing or alumni publications. This ensures that it has already been routed through the appropriate channels for approval, and provides consistency to university messaging.

Apply existing university policies to the social media world.
Existing policies that address university communication and privacy apply to the virtual world. Become familiar with such policies to ensure they are followed.

Information Technology Services Computing Policies

NAU’s Web Privacy Policy

Copyright laws must be adhered to in social media. Some great resources are available via Stanford University and Columbia University.
Guidelines for Social Media Use (courtesy of Illinois State University)

Respect
Differing views and opinions are welcome to be posted, but remember when carrying on a constructive discussion one should present thoughts and ideas in a non-offensive manner. Please remember to uphold the university’s mission of working together as a diversified community.

Responsibility
When posting please ensure information is accurate and beneficial to the conversation taking place. Post relevant and contributing information to the discussion by staying on topic.

Accuracy
It is important to take the time learn about an issue or topic before posting. Providing links or citations is beneficial to others as it allows them to see where information was gathered from and allows for further investigation and research into the topic. If something has been posted in error, please admit and correct the mistake as soon as possible.

Copyrights and fair use
Please remember to give others credit for their work and ideas. Do not post work by others without the proper permission and/or citation of the work.

Confidentiality
Please respect the confidentiality of the university and its various entities. Do not share information that is not meant to be common knowledge.

Represent
Identities should not be hidden or misrepresented when posting. It is important to state your connection and/or role with the University.

Branding of the University
Maintain the university graphic and editorial standards as found on the identity site: http://www4.nau.edu/marketing/graphicidentity.asp

Administration
Appointing an administrator to oversee the social networking site is encouraged. This person or group will be in charge of regularly monitoring the postings and their contents in order to maintain the University’s image.
**Stay connected**
Maintain the site with regular updates and postings.

**Community**
As a member of the social network, you are responsible to provide information that can be used to further the conversation among its members. Please remember to respect the other members’ time and post information that is relevant and of interest to the group.

**Pay attention**
Take the time to read and listen to what is being communicated by others. Doing so will allow you to better participate in productive discussions and limit miscommunications.

**Respond**
As a part of a social networking conversation, you should respond to prompts and questions in a timely manner.

**Judgment**
Exercise good judgment when posting. Remember you are representing the university when you post. Also consider how the post may be perceived by others before submitting it.

**Praise**
As the occasion arises it is good to extend congratulations or praise for accomplishments and valuable contributions to the network.

**University-related business**
Please remember to use your work time at the University and the University’s computers wisely when social networking. Limit your use of the University’s resources for university-related affairs.

**Personal information**
Use caution when posting personal information.

**Don’t spam**
Respect your peers and do not use this space to post irrelevant information.
Tips for use—Twitter and Facebook

Engage in conversations.
Post information that can be related to the university in some way, but don’t talk at your audience all the time. Think of it as if you are hosting a party. You may need to start the conversation, but allow those who follow you to read the content and converse with each other. Ask questions and comment occasionally, but don’t dominate the conversation. If the host of the party constantly interjected in conversations, the guests would leave. Social media is the same way. You want people to connect with you and others, share your information and your social media channel. Most importantly, remember that your followers and fans are there because you represent Northern Arizona University, so the content you post should somehow be connected to NAU and should have value so they will be compelled to retweet or repost it. If they want content on another subject, they will seek it somewhere else.

Spend twice as much time listening as you do speaking.
Keep your fingers on the pulse of what others are saying in general and about your group or the university. Listen to other “voices” of the university in social media and be open to asking for guidance or emulating the style of others. Again, like the host of a party, you are hosting a conversation. If you dominate the conversation, people will stop listening to you. Posting too often, such as eight times an hour, can cause fans and followers to unfollow you. Posting infrequently, such as once a week, may make them forget about you. Focus on quality over quantity, and post only when you have something of value to share. Retweeting your own tweets, reposting the same information and posting unrelated content are seen by many users as spam.

Use courtesy and respect.
Express gratitude to those who retweet your Twitter posts by thanking them in a Tweet or replying to them directly in a message. When you make a mistake, correct it as soon as possible. Everything posted on the internet exists forever, so there is no true delete button. Social media also is self-regulating, so trying to “bury” a story, tweet or issue will harm your reputation and credibility.

Some examples:
Secret Service blasts news network in rogue tweet
Kenneth Cole Egypt tweets enrage Twittersphere
Rogue beer tweet by Red Cross employee leads to donations

Be ready for the positives and the negatives.
Once you enter the world of social media, you must be prepared for questions and comments. Part of interacting is having honest conversations with those who may have little to no knowledge about your department or the university. Be thoughtful and put attention toward accuracy. Carefully consider what you will post and how it is related to the university, how it may be received by your intended audience and by those you didn’t intend to reach in the general public. Keep your tone friendly, consistent and professional.
At times, some users create a hostile environment and behave combatively. If you encounter this, whether it is directed toward you and other users, consider adopting a code of conduct for your page such as the one established by NAU’s Alumni Association.

Seek help when you need it.
If a communication issue arises and you are unsure how to handle it, you think a subject may be controversial, or you observe ongoing communication that is harmful to the university and may require notifying others, contact the Office of Public Affairs for assistance.