

Strategic Communications Forum: Social media breakout outline (Kansas Department of Transportation)

1. How long has KDOT been utilizing social media in your overall communications strategy and what role does social media play in your public education and awareness initiatives?

- KDOT has been utilizing social media channels to amplify key messaging from more traditional means of reaching/educating the driving public about the importance of seatbelt use and the dangers of impaired driving since 2007. Our first presence was on the social network “MySpace” back when it was the predominant medium for interacting with friends online (before Facebook knocked it out of the top spot). We had more than 1,000 friends, many of which were active participants on the page, requesting information and educational materials, and sharing our announcements with their sphere of influence online.
- Once Facebook became the largest social network, we quickly shifted our focus to Facebook for reasons we all know about (it’s the third largest country in the world when all users are combined), and extended our strategy to encompass two other wildly popular social media channels – YouTube and Twitter.
- Content is customized for each channel – Twitter posts are geared to industry partners, law enforcement partners and media; YouTube content is designed to reinforce the campaign(s) we’re focused on in that particular month; while Facebook is our “go-to” daily channel, where conversations and feedback are encouraged.
- We update the Facebook page daily with content planned at the beginning of the contract year, which is of course guided by the NHTSA communications calendar. While we don’t update YouTube daily, we drive traffic to relevant videos during CIOT and OTL/UA campaigns to reinforce our messaging platform. Finally, we use Twitter to drive traffic to Facebook and YouTube, and to pitch social-media-savvy media contacts.
- As of this writing, we have 767 fans on Facebook (none of whom came from advertising; rather, we’ve grown our fan base organically), 881 followers on Twitter, and our YouTube channel has 2,552 channel views (meaning the videos we’ve developed and posted have been viewed that many times) while the videos we’ve linked to have been viewed 6,901 times.

2. *Success stories*

- Facebook:
 - Each new post we push out via our Facebook page generates an average of 650 impressions. In terms of scale, that's about 13,000 impressions per month (156,000 per year) just from our Facebook activity.
 - Overall engagement among fans is very high -- post views exceed 9,000 on a weekly basis.

- Twitter:
 - We've successfully pitched social-media-savvy reporters via Twitter to cover our "Click it. Or ticket." and impaired driving statewide media events.
 - Our Klout ranking is 38/100, which is a very high score for a government organization feed.

- YouTube:
 - We created, posted and publicized via traditional and social media channels a series of "webisodes" created from b-roll footage of previous statewide media events and repackaged into a gameshow format. We secured 1,200+ views of the series over the course of the two-week OTL/UA campaign in 2009.

3. *Lessons learned*

- Groups of concerned citizens can use social media to amplify their voices and secure mainstream, traditional media coverage of their issues. Attempting to control or silence their awareness efforts is counterproductive – they're saying whatever they want to say whether you like it or not. Providing a public forum via Facebook (that's moderated) is a good solution as the public still has a place to voice concerns without perceiving government censorship (unless the remarks are offensive or vulgar).