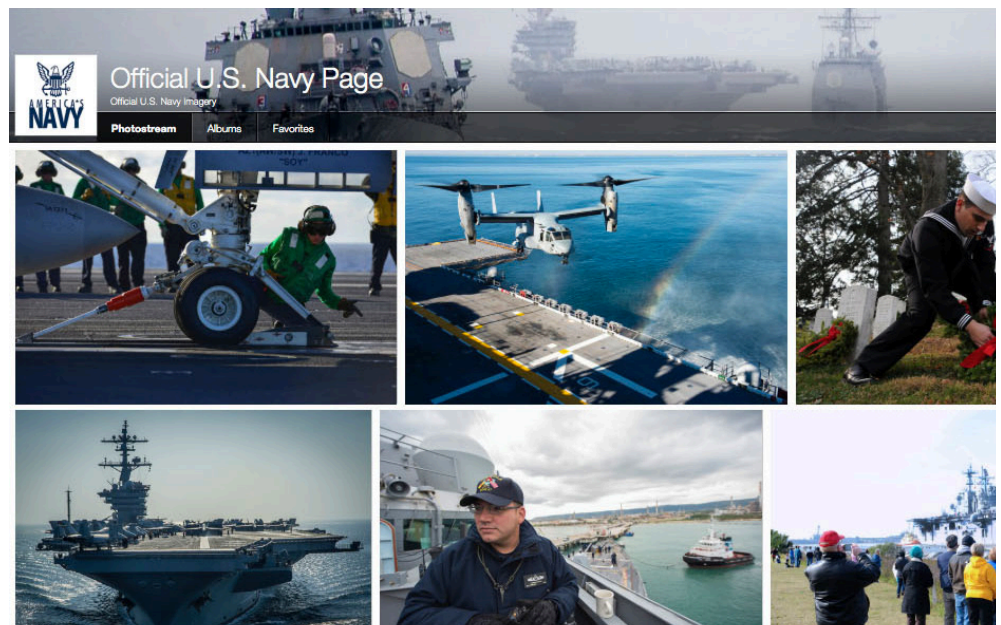




# Navy Public Affairs Guide

## Social Media



DISCLAIMER: The mention of specific social media platforms or Internet tools does not imply endorsement by the Department of Defense or the Department of the Navy.

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# Social Media – Another Communication Tool

## Social Media Defined

Social media describes the different means by which people, enabled by digital communication technologies, connect with each other to share information and engage in conversations on topics of mutual interest. Social media is an umbrella term describing a variety of communication mediums and platforms including social networks, blogs, mobile applications, and others. The way people get information has changed and the desire to have real conversations with individuals, organizations, and government entities has increased. This presents a tremendous opportunity for all commands to more effectively communicate with Sailors, Navy families, and the public.

## Social Media as a Communication Tool

The Navy has an obligation to provide timely and accurate information about the activities of our commands to the public, keep our Sailors informed, and build relations with our communities. We are not limited to a particular medium to complete these objectives.

In fact, social media allows us another means of sharing information with external and internal audiences, enables more symmetrical, two-way communication with stakeholders, and also reaches out to offline and online communities.

If we want to effectively reach an audience, we have to use the communication channels they use. Data clearly shows that our audiences are increasingly using social media and they expect that we will be there for them. Social media and other Web 2.0 technologies present unequalled opportunities for us to share the Navy story in an authentic, transparent and rapid manner while building richer, more substantive relationships with people who we may not have reached through traditional communication channels.

If we choose not participate in social media, conversations about the Navy will still take place, only those conversations will not include our perspective.

Your social media sites should be an integral part of your command's communications strategy. Before launching a social media site for your command, consider what you want to accomplish. What are your communication objectives and how do they move your command closer to achieving its mission?

You also should consider your command's priority audiences and use the right social media platform to reach them. Do you most want to communicate with Sailors in your command, command leadership, family members, the local community, a broader DoD audience, the American public, or another group altogether?

Examples of measurable communications objectives with priority audiences identified:

**INFORM** our command's Sailors and family members of command news, announcements and accomplishments, to promote readiness of the command.

**ENGAGE** in a dialogue with the local community including Navy family members where our command is based to build awareness and understanding about the Navy in the area.

**INCREASE** level of awareness and support for your command's mission among the DoD community.

**Benefits of Incorporating Social Media into Command Communication**

Benefits of communicating with the command's audiences using social media:

**EFFICIENT:** Leveraging social media allows the command to publish once and reach many. Share key information and messages and instantly access a worldwide audience.

**DIRECT:** We no longer rely solely on external, traditional news media to share the Navy's story with external audiences. Social media enables Navy commands to augment or amplify traditional news media efforts by directly reaching audiences.

**ENGAGED:** Social media channels encourage two-way communication by allowing users to provide feedback, share opinions, or comment on information, yielding rich insights for communication planning and decision making.

**TRANSPARENT:** Directly engaging on an open, social platform builds a relationship between your command and the public. By listening, sharing and engaging with others online, social media provides a unique opportunity to build trust with your audiences and present authoritative information about your command.

# Social Media Policy

## Department of Defense Policy

Department of Defense Instruction (DODI) 8550.01, released Sept. 11, 2012, discusses the use of internet-based capabilities such as social media and provides guidelines for their use. The instruction acknowledges Internet-based capabilities are integral to operations across the Department of Defense. It also requires the NIPRNET be configured to provide access to Internet-based capabilities across all DoD Components while balancing benefits and vulnerabilities.

Three new terms are explained in this instruction:

### Internet-based capabilities (IbC)

All publicly accessible information capabilities and applications available across the Internet in locations not owned, operated, or controlled by the DoD or the Federal Government. Internet-based capabilities include collaborative tools such as social networking sites, social media, user generated content, social software, e-mail, instant messaging, and discussion forums.

### External Official Presences (OPs)

Official public affairs activities conducted on non-DoD sites on the Internet (e.g. the U.S. Navy on Facebook).

### Official use

Official uses of Internet-based capabilities unrelated to public affairs are permitted. However, because these interactions take place in a public venue, personnel acting in their official capacity shall coordinate with public affairs and operations security staff to ensure organizational awareness.

## Department of the Navy Policy

SECNAVINST 5720.44C Change 1, Department of the Navy Public Affairs Policy & Regulations, provides policy for the official and unofficial (personal) use of social media and for the content and administration of official Navy presences on social media.

In addition, it is important to educate Sailors on safe and effective social media use to promote morale and readiness as well as avoid operations security (OPSEC) violations or other risks that could compromise the command's mission or Sailors' reputations and safety.

# Social Media Approach

No matter which social media platform is used, the basic principles of transparency and authenticity should apply to your command's communication. Social media platforms are designed for building and fostering relationships and, as such, your command's use should embody the following principles:

## Authenticity

It is critical that people know who you are on social media. If they can't be sure they won't trust you and won't form a relationship with you.

## Transparency

On social media, there is more than an expectation of transparency; there is a demand for it. Attempts to hide embarrassing information or avoid unpleasant topics will not only be ineffective, it will likely be counter-productive and draw more attention.

## Consistency

Your stakeholders who are using social media will quickly go elsewhere to meet their information needs if you are erratic with your participation. Decide how much time you will dedicate to your social media effort and stick to it. A burst of activity will be wasted if it is followed by a long period of absence.

## Listening

To best identify and meet your command's communication needs on social media, it is imperative to use social listening techniques to identify and assess conversations about your command and communication goals. The best way to create a social listening or monitoring strategy is discussed later in this guide.

## Responsiveness

Social media, even more so than traditional media, requires responsiveness on the part of the organization. Answer questions. Acknowledge concerns. Thank people who offer suggestions. This is a two-way medium, and you are talking with your stakeholders to build understanding.

## Positive attitude

Just like in interpersonal relationships, social media users want to interact with others who help create solutions, not problems.

## Sincerity

Be yourself and be genuine. Social media is conversational, and it is appropriate to show some personality, even in an official capacity. You do not need to be a disembodied voice of the organization.

## Humor

While we take what we do as a Navy seriously, don't take yourself, your content, or others' criticism too seriously. Social media users expect and approve of levity and humor. Know where the line is between appropriate and inappropriate, and use humor when warranted.

## Respect

Social media is a flat environment. You and your organization are not above the collective or individuals. Respect others' opinions, even when you don't agree with them.

A common concern of using social media is the loss of control of the command's communication with the public. The reality, however, is that in this flat environment the command never had control in the first place. The only communication the command truly controls is what its representatives say and to whom. Not participating in a conversation on social media does not mean that the conversation is not taking place; it just means that the command is not part of it – and probably unaware of it. On social media, just as in the rest of the world, there is always the possibility that what it said would be spread and possibly misinterpreted. In fact, a distinct advantage of social media is that if the command is listening, misinterpretations can be quickly spotted and accurate information shared.

The flat environment of social media also allows for many points of view and does not necessarily favor a single authoritative voice. So, a comment about the Navy by a citizen is potentially just as important and authoritative as a comment by an official Navy spokesperson. This equity should not be a deterrent to participating, but rather a motivating factor. The command can leave it to the engaged public to communicate for it or the command can participate and lead the conversation. Through consistent and dependable participation on social media, Navy commands can build trust with their communities and be an outstanding, authoritative voice among Navy conversations online.

Social media is a significantly more open and global communication platform than the Navy has used. It has demonstrated real power and benefits in reaching key audiences. With this openness comes some risks, they can be mitigated through training, in monitoring, and applying the principles mentioned earlier in this guide; the real risks are found in not being present. Ultimately the command can choose to either lead conversations, or be led by the conversations that take place without it.

# Effective Social Media Starts with Listening

Before you stand up a command presence on social media, the most important thing that you should do first is listen. Social listening, or sometimes referred to as monitoring, is the proactive action used to determine what is being said about your command or communication priorities to best understand your command's reputation, identify conversations, find influencers, and recognize breaking news. Regardless of your personal or command involvement in social media, every public affairs officer/ shop should set up a system to listen to social media and elsewhere online for content and conversations of relevance to the command. Listening should be an active portion of your social strategy and must occur regularly to be effective.

There are a number of tools available to manage the listening effort. The following bullet points are based on the Navy's experience monitoring the Internet and social media. Each command's experiences using these tips may vary, so experiment and come up with the best combination that works.

**Develop a keyword glossary for the command.** Spend some time to develop a glossary of all of the keywords and phrases that might be used to either describe or search for the command, its mission(s) and subjects of interest to the command. This list will change over time as new issues arise.

**Setup an RSS aggregator.** RSS stands for Really Simple Syndication and is a simple method for having relevant information pushed to you. There are a host of RSS aggregators available. It is important is to have a single means to collect the RSS feeds created.

**Setup automated searches.** Each command is free to use any other search site or tool for automated searches. You may create searches using the keywords from your keyword glossary. For each search there will be an RSS link on the results page. Clicking on this link will give you a page with an RSS feed address. Copy and paste this URL from your browser to your RSS aggregator, and whenever one of those keywords or the combinations of them appear in a search, it will automatically be fed to your feed aggregator, automating the search process.

**Subscribe to RSS feeds.** If there are specific websites and blogs that have information of relevance to the command, those RSS feeds from those sites can be added to the command's aggregator. Sites offer a variety of feeds of their content. If a site doesn't offer feeds of its content, try entering the URL for the site and the aggregator will do the rest of the work.

**Use General Services Administration (GSA) approved vendor services.** There are an increasing number of services available on the market that will help you monitor social media for relevant content. Generally speaking these services will give you a greater insight into issues of relevance by automating your monitoring and providing relevant analytics. The trade-off for these labor saving services is that many of them aren't free and may exceed your available resources. Ultimately, it is up to the command to determine if the insights and/or time saved using one or more of these services meet communication objectives on social media.

**Nothing is perfect — trust, but verify.** While this methodology will go a long way to improving and automating the command's listening online, it is not a 100 percent solution. Relevant content can still evade automated searches; analytics from both free and paid services may just scratch the surface of an issue. Maintain a reasonable skepticism about what you hear and before responding, make sure you have reliable information and verify the content.

Once you have the command's listening system is in place, it will be easier to provide an accurate picture of public opinion and develop more informed, effective communication campaigns, regardless of the medium used to communicate those messages.



# Determining if the Command Needs a Social Media Presence

Social media presences are not a silver bullet for all of your command's communication needs. Not every command needs a social media presence. It is far better to not create a presence to start, than to start one and rarely post or abandon the social platform. The commander and PAO should consider the following before standing up any command social media presence:

## Why does the command need a social media presence?

Are you creating a presence to engage an audience or to post press releases? Make sure social media will actually meet your command goals and be willing to identify which type of online communication platform is right for your command. If you plan on posting press releases, social media might not be the appropriate venue.

## Do you have the right manpower and resources to maintain a social presence?

Does your command have a full-time PAO (either an officer designated 1650/1655, a Mass Communication Specialist or a government civilian in the 1035 series)?

If not, does your command have a trained collateral duty PAO? Has anyone discussed this with the command's immediate superior in command's (ISIC) PAO?

Before creating a presence, make sure you have the staff necessary to remain engaged long-term, identifying and posting good content, social listening, and engaging with your audiences. Also consider who will take over when you leave this command.

Who will be responsible for approving the content prior to posting?

Who will post the content?

Who will review the information for public release IAW SECNAVINST 5720.44C Change 1, DoD Instruction 8550.01, and related instructions?

## What information does the command need to share? What other means exist to share/disseminate this information at the command?

## Does your command or base already have a presence?

We discourage creating a presence for a small, segmented audience if the content is available on elsewhere. Good social presences offer something unique. Splintering an audience among too many social presences can confuse audiences. In many cases, it is better to create sharable content to be posted on established presences.

## How often will new content need to be posted?

## How often will existing content need to be updated? What drives content updates?

## Alternatives to Social Media Presences

If your command desires to share information or content privately with command members only, a social media presence is not the best choice. Using social media regardless if it's a private, closed, or members only platform is never the right place to share sensitive information. If your command is not comfortable with sharing its communication content with the entire world, do not post it on social media. If you have sensitive information you want to make available to only a specific group, consider participating in one of the Navy's private portals requiring a CAC to access, or sharing the information via morning quarters, command bulletin boards, shared drives, command-wide emails, etc.

If the information or content is to be shared with family members, a social media presence may not be the best choice. Consider using the command's dial-in family line, conveying it through the command ombudsman, emails and or family support group meetings.

If the information or content is to be shared with the local community, but the command is not one of CNIC's subordinate commands, contact the base PAO and/or the Navy region PAO and request to have it shared on the base's social media presences.

If you have information or content that does not regularly change, the command's public website might be a better choice, particularly if the information does not change often. Contact the command's PAO or the ISIC's PAO for further guidance.

If you have content that is for a specific exercise or mission, a social media presence may not be the best choice. A social presence should not be created for a specific event. If you do not plan to post content regularly, do not create a social media presence. Instead of creating new presences for exercises, consider creating content about your exercise that is optimized for established social media presences.

# Planning for Communication Success in Social Media

When planning to use social media, you should first consider how social media fits into your overall communication strategy. Social media efforts should complement your other communication efforts. Your command's social media presences function as an extension of, not instead of, your command's primary public website.

A strategy allows you to:

- Define and measure success
- Develop shared understanding of the purpose of social media use for your command
- Define social media roles and responsibilities among your command
- Justify future resources

Like any overall communication strategy you'll want to consider many of the same things:

## 1 IDENTIFY AUDIENCES

Identify and prioritize audiences you hope to communicate with

Be specific (Sailors in your command, local residents, families, etc.)

## 2 GOAL

What is the "big picture" reason for using social media?

Goals should reflect your command's communication goals

## 3 OBJECTIVES

Set realistic and measurable objectives to track progress

Plan for the near, medium and long term

Consider engagement, not just headcounts of fans

## 4 CONTENT

Determine the story you want to tell and how, which should align with your command's goals

Draft posting guidelines and/or comment policy to set expectations and determine after-action when a violation of policy occurs

Find topics that interest your command's stakeholders and achieve its communication goals

Create a content calendar, providing a quick tool to plan posts

Be flexible and allow the command's stakeholders to shape conversations

Listen to the audience and enable a real dialogue

Go beyond repopulating content prepared for traditional channels

Post content that engages the audience with the command and with each other.

## 5 STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Develop a standard operating procedure to manage workflow, assign tasks, and allow for seamless personnel transitions

Determine the most appropriate team to manage account(s)

Determine the right roles and level of access for each manager on each tool

## 6 DEVELOP A CONTINGENCY PLAN FOR EMERGENCIES

Breaking news, social media hacking, hijacking, or vandalism; loss of staff/Internet access are all incidents where having a plan ahead of time, with specific procedures identified, will help your organization deal with a crisis situation. Take the guess work out of "what should we do" and save your team time by planning in advance so you can begin handling the crisis.

Tips to consider including in your plan:

Multiple site administrators – If you lose Internet service, go on vacation, or cannot make posts for any reason, you should have a trusted colleague who can take the reins of your account and post critical information. For ships, this might be an ombudsman.

How will your team handle command breaking news? Who has release authority?

### IF ONE OF YOUR COMMAND'S SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCES HAS BEEN HACKED, HIJACKED OR VANDALIZED:

Inform the platform that your command's site has been compromised.

Inform CHINFO, which can contact social media POCs at each platform directly to help monitor and secure your site as quickly as possible.

## Choosing the Right Social Media Platform(s) for Your Command

A command could use any number of social media platforms to reach its key audiences, but to be effective, the command should carefully consider a select few platforms that will reach the largest percentage of its audiences and enable it to accomplish its communication goals. It is important to ensure the command communicates with all relevant audiences without bias toward any one particular platform. Additional research into the command's audiences will be necessary. A matrix of popular social media platforms is included here to help the PAO determine which one(s) is/are the best fit to reach the command's audiences based on its communication objectives, audience preferences, and available content.

PLATFORM	DETAILS	USER INFORMATION*
Facebook	Most popular social media site with the highest level of engagement	71% of adults
Twitter	Popular among college-educated audiences and high income earners	23% of adults
Instagram	Popular among young adults and minorities	52% of 18-29 year olds
Pinterest	Popular among women	42% of women

\*Per 2014 Pew Reserch data based on internet users (not the total population).  
<http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/01/09/social-media-update-2014/>

The best social media platform(s) are where the command's key audiences are active online. Often, listening and following social media platforms and conducting simple web searches on sites like Google, Facebook, Twitter, and other platforms will be enough to determine where the command's key audiences are located. Once you have a good sense of where the command's primary audiences are active online, then the PAO can make an informed decision about which platforms are right to achieve the command's communications objectives.

## If a Social Media Presence is Right for the Command

Official use of social media is a public affairs responsibility. DoD Instruction 8550.10 requires that all official social media presences be registered with the DoD. This is because on many social media platforms anyone can create an account to discuss issues related to any subject, including the command. Therefore, it is necessary to clearly delineate which social media presences are official. This can be done by registering a command presence with the Navy Social Media Directory at [www.navy.mil](http://www.navy.mil).

Besides being a requirement, registration benefits the command. First, it puts the command social media presences on the social media directory at Navy.mil. Registration ensures that the command's presences are included in any U.S. Government/DoD Terms of Service (ToS) Agreement(s). For example, official sites on Facebook have targeted advertising removed. Second, it validates that the command's presence is official and valid, deterring impersonation.

### Requirement for social media sites to be accepted into the Navy Social Media Directory

- CO or PAO approval
- Submit with valid .mil email address
- Presence must link to official Navy URL (website address)
- Presence must post disclaimer text
- Presence must have a user agreement as appropriate
- Presence must be clearly identified as "official"
- Presence must be unlocked and open to the public – no private groups/pages will be approved as official command presences
- Only "official pages" on Facebook can be registered and should be labeled as "organization — government." Private groups will not be approved
- Presence identifying the individual instead, the command or billet are not acceptable as "official" presence with the exception of a notable few (SECNAV, CNO, MCPON)

# Best Practices in Managing the Command's Social Media Presences

Managing command social media presences takes time, how much depends on the popularity of its content and community size. Although some commands find it useful to have one main point of contact to manage social media sites, it's strongly recommended that any social media presence be run by a small team to ensure that there is no potential single point of failure for being able to manage information in a timely manner.

## Establish a Single Command Presence

In larger commands, there is a tendency for offices/units within a command to want to have their own presences. For example, the chapel may want to have its own presence, the Navy Counselor or DAPA for the command may want their own presence, etc. While this is up to the discretion of the command, it is recommended that you maintain a single command presence within each social media platform and allow those different offices/units to feed content to the command presence. That means one command Facebook page, Twitter account, and so on. The reason for this is that each subset of the command that has its own social media presence splinters the audience for the command and can increase the time spent managing multiple presences. Unless there is a compelling reason for a social media presence as a subset of the command presence, such as reaching a unique audience, it is strongly recommended that there be only one command social media presence per registration.

## Communicate with Families

For many commands, communicating with families will be a priority. Many Navy ombudsman and family readiness groups use social media to communicate with families. Command spouses and your ombudsman are an essential part of the command leadership team. As such, they should be part of your communication strategy.

Reach out to these family resources when developing your communication strategy to determine how you can best work together on social media. Some commands provide their ombudsman with administrator rights to their social media accounts. Others manage online presences in tandem and cross-promote content as appropriate. Others still use their main command page to communicate with family members and welcome discussion from families on their site. Whichever approach the command chooses, actively engaging with family members on social media will demonstrate a willingness to listen to families and amplify command leadership messaging across multiple communities.

## Ensure Information is Releasable

Managing official social media presences is a public affairs function. Like any content posted to a Navy website, information posted to an official social media presence must be either already in the public domain or must be approved for release by the Commanding Officer, Public Affairs Officer or anyone else designated with release authority on behalf of the command. Commands are ultimately responsible for official content posted on their social media. Contractors may help manage a social media presence but they cannot serve as a spokesperson for the Navy. Also, to the maximum extent possible, any content released by the command also must be present, in some form, on the command website for compliance issues.

## Create a Written Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

To ensure consistent management, commands should establish standard operating procedures to monitor, post content and engage with people. The command should not expect to be able to manually monitor social media command around the clock – that’s a full time job for anyone! Instead, aim for the command’s team to be able to check on the command’s social media presences periodically throughout the day. By distributing this work across a team can result in better listening and management of social media. There also are listening systems available for purchase.

The plan to manage command social media sites should be coordinated with command leadership, public affairs, and other personnel who may be generating or publishing content to the site. The management plan should be led by a command spokesperson and should include the following elements:

### **Site administrators:**

Who has access to administer the account? Grant permission to multiple administrators to ensure there is no single point of failure.

### **Objectives for the site:**

What do you hope to accomplish by communicating on this site?

### **Target audience(s)**

Who are you trying to reach?

### **Type and frequency of content to be posted:**

Will you share news stories, images, original content, or information about local events? What’s important and interesting to your target audience? See a sample content plan in the Appendix.

### **Comment policy:**

Why will posts be removed? Will comments be moderated or automatically published? See the Navy’s Facebook comment policy as an example at [Facebook.com/USNavy](https://www.facebook.com/USNavy) under the “about” section.

### **Listening policy:**

How often will you check the page for comments? Will you respond and engage in a dialogue with your community members?

### **Transition plan:**

When personnel change over, how will you transfer administrator rights and the plan to new personnel?

### **Emergency/Contingency Plan:**

Due to the speed, reach, and direct nature of social media, these channels have proven to be effective for use in crisis situations. In recent crises, social media has facilitated the distribution of command information to key audiences and media while providing a means for dialogue among the affected and interested groups. Trust can’t be surged following a crisis, so the best course of action is to consistently engage the command’s social media community before a crisis occurs. Use this checklist to prepare and respond to a crisis using social media before, during, and after a crisis occurs.

## BEFORE

Establish a command presence on relevant social media platforms

Plan and train multiple people at the command to communicate on social media presences during a crisis

Identify keywords that may be used when communicating about the command in a potential crisis (e.g., crash, collision, evacuation, humanitarian assistance)

Identify key audiences such as Sailors, family members, local citizens, media, etc.

Post regular, relevant content to the command's social media presences to alert key audiences that the command page is an authoritative and consistent resource of information

Establish a list of alternative communication methods such as text messaging, Twitter, and Facebook

## DURING

Use all available communication channels to distribute information to affected audiences

Communicate relevant and timely information as it is released — even if the command only has part of the full story. It is better to release information in segments rather than waiting until you have the entire story (at which point, it may be too late)

Listen to what people are saying about the topic by watching the command's social media presences and answering questions as accurately and quickly as possible

To identify and correct misinformation, identify other channels to distribute information to reach additional audiences and query relevant keywords on social media platforms and search engines

## AFTER

Thank community members for their assistance in disseminating information, answering each other's questions and supporting one another through the crisis

Ask designated communicators for lessons learned and incorporate changes into the command's crisis plan

Continue to provide updates and information to audiences to maintain interest in the command's social media presences

## Responding to Comments on Sensitive Topics

If your command has a social presence, it is expected that you will engage with your audience. Often times, it may mean responding to sensitive topics that may or may not pertain to your communication goals. People reach out through social media as a means to get help or because they are frustrated by conventional communication channels. For command climate, sexual harassment or assault issues, work with an identified Navy subject matter expert before drafting a response. As a manager of a command social media platform, you should be prepared to respond to sensitive topics and when necessary, elevate questions or remarks to the proper Navy chain of command.



**Content Removal Guidelines:**

Don't remove content or take a page offline unless there is specific violation of the command's published business rules warranting removal, including OPSEC. Organizations that remove content simply because the content is unflattering lose the trust of their audiences and risk very public backlash. While the fear of someone posting negative content about the command on your social site is an often cited argument against social media, research finds that about the majority of organization/ brand mentions on the Web are positive and only a small percent of brand mentions are negative. Furthermore, if a negative comment is posted on the command's social media presence, it is likely to be addressed by other users on that platform.

**Follow Records-Keeping Policy:**

All federal public websites and online presences must comply with existing laws and regulations related to the management of public web records, including the NARA guidance related to web records issued on December 17, 2005. Organizations should review existing laws and regulations, and other guidance, to ensure their public websites and online presences comply:

- Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Parts 1220-1238
- E-Gov Act of 2002, Section 207(e), "Public Access to Electronic Information"
- End-of-Administration Web Snapshot
- National Archives and Records Administration Web Harvest Background Information
- Federal Agency Records Officers, by Agency
- NARA Guidance for Implementing Section 207(e) of the E-Gov Act of 2002
- NARA Guidance on Managing Web Records (January 2005)
- NARA Guidance on Managing Records in Web 2.0/Social Media Platforms (October 2010)
- Implications of Recent Web Technologies for NARA Web Guidance

# Creating “Social” Content

Before covering a story, discuss the concept of gathering content with the goal of having products that are appropriate for sharing through a variety of channels, including a news story, blog, quote, or photo on Facebook, etc.

Social media content is easily created by making small adjustments to the content the PA team already produces. Just keep in mind “value added” and whether the information posted to social media is something the command fans and followers feel compelled to engage with and forward on to their network of friends.

Here are some tips on how to make your content more sharable:

## Facebook

Command Facebook pages have provided platforms to recognize Sailors and civilian employees in addition to providing timely information and announcements. The type of content the command shares on Facebook will vary depending on how the Facebook page is used and the target audience. Here are some considerations for engaging Facebook posts:

- Create posts that encourage fans to participate and engage. Some examples: pop quiz questions, photo contests, etc.
- Messages from the commanding officer and/ or command leadership (often displayed as a Facebook note)
- Creative videos
- Links to content (on Facebook or elsewhere online) that are relevant to the command audience
- Command leadership/personnel engaged and interacting with the audience, answering questions and being social

## Twitter

Initially, it is tempting to tie the command’s Facebook feed to its Twitter account, but these are different platforms with different audiences. Connecting a Twitter account to an automated feed usually costs the command interested followers. Even if the command does not tweet on a daily basis, it should maintain a Twitter presence and monitor Twitter as often as possible as part of its listening system.

The Navy effectively used Twitter during contingency operations, Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief missions, and for crisis communication. Often Twitter will be the first source of breaking news, and it is important that all Navy communicators understand how the medium works. When Twitter must be used for crisis communication, provide a shortened URL to an official Navy website with more detailed information.

Tips for creating engaging and informative tweets:

- Post clear and concise updates in real time
- Create clever content that intrigue followers to click the link you provide.
- Limit tweets to no more than 120 characters of the 140 character maximum. This is to leave room for your followers to share you tweet
- Use a URL shortener to share links to content and track click-through data
- Include relevant Twitter handles or hashtags in your tweets

A hashtag is a keyword or phrase preceded by a #. Tips for creating and using hashtags:

- Hashtags make it easier for your tweets to be discovered and followed
- Research how a hashtag is being used and make sure it's context aligns with your communication goals
- Don't overuse hashtags. Make sure they are used purposefully. Some frequently used hashtags are #USNavy, #OperateForward, #PresenceMatters, #Milspouse

## Video

Video received over social media has a unique feel that differs from packaged material that Navy commands have provided in the past for Daily News Updates and All Hands. Commands should always forward video to Navy Media Content Operations because it can push video content to an even larger audience and ensure it is considered for inclusion in the Navy's permanent archive. Be aware of copyright laws and do not use music without permission (See the Navy Public Affairs Guide to Release of Information for more details).

Tips on creating sharable videos:

- Use B-roll (natural sound, minimal edits) video
- Keep videos short. Social media viewers' attention span is shorter than the TV viewers. Depending on the platform, video does best when it's between 30 seconds to 2 minutes.
- Consider size limitations to ensure upload or download
- Use creative video pieces set to music (remember the copyright issues)
- Record and share short video blogs or a Sailor or commander speaking directly to the camera with b-roll video covering it
- Consider a video angle that offers a "behind the scenes" feel
- Use minimal computer graphics with any video product
- Put the video slate at the end, not the start of the piece.

## Photos

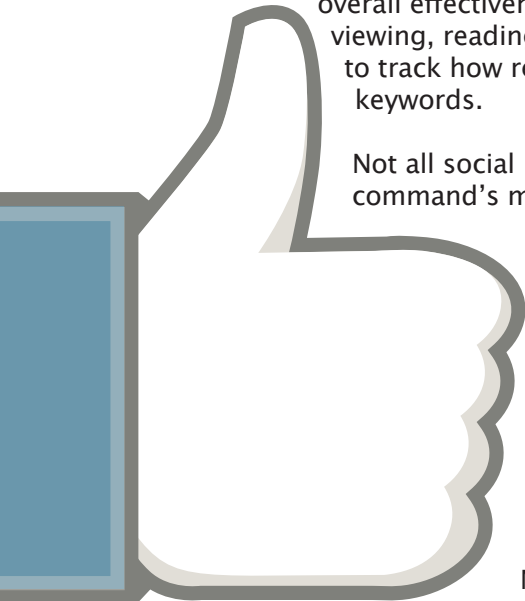
Social media increased the command's ability to share photos with a larger audience. Commands can post photos from awards ceremonies to a Facebook page or upload photos from a command event to Flickr, but this does not alleviate your responsibility to follow current instructions on VI release and records management. Forward photos of significant importance to the Navy to Navy Media Content Operations for wider distribution and archiving (no grip and grins, please!).

While it is easy to post photos, remain mindful of all of the considerations used to release the image to the media. If the command wouldn't give it to them, don't post it on social media. Photos posted to social media should be captioned so that it is clear what is taking place. A photo without appropriate context may give an unintended message. Also, consider that photos posted online often have extra metadata attached such as GPS coordinates. Before posting any image make sure that you don't accidentally include any location information that may violate OPSEC.

# Measuring Effectiveness

As communicators, it is our job to help leadership set clear and measurable objectives for our command's communication efforts. Once these objectives have been set, there are a number of metrics that can be used to demonstrate effect and impact.

With traditional forms of media (newspaper, television, radio), we are only able to capture the number of relative impressions or general reach numbers of particular media outlets, making it difficult to know how effectively your message/content was delivered or if it was understood. One of the significant advantages to using social media to communicate is that digital technology provides the opportunity to collect data about your communications, your audiences and your overall effectiveness. Through this data you can quickly determine how many people are viewing, reading, liking, commenting and sharing your content. You also have the ability to track how relevant issues are being discussed by monitoring feeds and searches for keywords.



Not all social media metrics have the same level of significance. Depending on your command's mission and communication objectives, different metrics will have more or less significance. Measures such as fan and follower counts and number of posts you make have limited value, as they only tell us about the reach of the message and don't provide insight into the effectiveness of that message. Metrics that show engagement and interaction are good measures of effectiveness as they demonstrate direct interaction with your content. Examples of these metrics include, likes, comments and impressions in Facebook, replies or re-tweets in Twitter, and comments in Flickr, YouTube, Facebook, and blogs. Metrics are most significant when they are tied to measurable objectives as they can give clear indicators of trends and progress.

Most verified social media platforms offer some form of basic metrics for posts, interactions, sharing, etc. as a part of their product. However, you should not limit yourself to the metrics and analytics that sites provide. Additional capabilities are available through paid services, but it is important do to a certain level of analysis by hand.

Tracking your command's posts, significant issues, and events can provide significant context to any trends online. Performing content analysis of posts and comments to examine reoccurring themes and sentiment (positive/ negative/neutral) can take time, but it's an easy way to get a sense of the tone of conversations and can alert you to important shifts in conversation over time.

# Maintaining OPSEC

OPSEC rules are universal. If you wouldn't say it, write it or type it, don't post it on social media. Operations security should be maintained online just as it is offline. OPSEC violations commonly occur when personnel share information with people they do not know well or are unaware of loose privacy settings. Focus on communicating these key tips with Sailors and their families to avoid OPSEC violations at your command.

Take the following steps to avoid OPSEC breaches at your command:

Protect your families by limiting the amount and type of information you post about family members such as names, addresses, local towns, schools, etc.

Identify personnel authorized to post content to social media sites and ensure they are the only individuals with access to those sites.

Establish local procedures to ensure that all information posted on social media is releasable.

Ensure all information posted is in accordance with local public affairs guidance and Navy Public Affairs Regulations.

Monitor your command's social media sites for posts that violate OPSEC and if there is a violation, remove the information.

Conduct periodic training with Sailors and families on appropriate versus inappropriate social media behavior.