SOCIAL NETWORKS FORECAST 2019: GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC SECTOR EDITION

Hootsuite's annual <u>Social Networks Forecast</u> breaks down current trends and how they'll affect the outlook for each social network. Here we add a government lens to advise on how agencies should invest time and resources on social media this year.

FACEBOOK

After facing a number of data breaches that compromised more than 137 million of their 2.2 billion users, Facebook will spearhead the charge to restore trust in 2019.[1] With a number of major elections happening in the next 18 months, Facebook is enhancing security features and transparency for users around the globe, with dedicated artificial intelligence tools, fact checking partners, and more than 20,000 new safety and content reviewers.[2]

Government agencies using Facebook in 2019 face a double-edged sword. According to Edelman, there has been little recovery in trust in government since the historic low of 2017, and this compounds the lack of trust in the social platforms themselves.[3]

What agencies can do is use social media to contribute meaningfully to the communities they serve. Round Rock, Texas reports that their sense-of-place photographs establish the city's social handles as part of and proud of the area. The images provide ample opportunities for engagement, as the content often reaches the widest audience among the city's posts. They promote positive sentiment among the city's followers and play their own small part in rebuilding trust between government and its citizens.

"We try to engage our residents with "sense-of-place" type content to help them feel good about their community, build civic pride and trust, and feel connected with their government again."[4]

Austin Ellington
Digital Communications Coordinator,
City of Round Rock, Texas
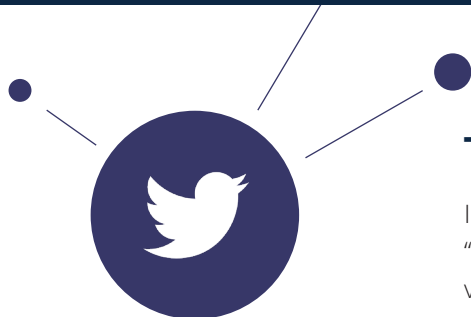
TWITTER

In 2019, Twitter will double down on security and crack down on bots and "dehumanizing speech." After a tumultuous year fighting racism, threats of violence, spam, and abuse, Twitter is drafting new safety policies with critical public input and increased transparency as the social network looks to find its direction forward.[5]

For organizations looking to make an impact on Twitter in 2019, think of the platform as a space for positive messaging, as well as constant engagement with your audience.

Vancouver International Airport (YVR) describes its mission as "Connecting British Columbia proudly to the world".[6] The social media team delivered on this mission with a campaign in 2018 to promote its record number of passengers and the associated benefits that increased tourism brings to the local economy. This culminated in a feel-good video that celebrated the arrival of passenger number 25 million:

The YVRAirport Twitter account combines campaigns like this one with business-as-usual travel updates and advisories, as well as responses to visitor questions. This combination, all in a unique tone of voice, led the team to win at the recent Twitter Canada Awards, taking home the prize for Best Banter.[7]

Twitter remains an effective and vital channel for two-way dialogue. A balanced Twitter strategy can go a long way toward restoring trust and the human aspect of social media that the platforms are so keen to promote in 2019.

"Our goal is to keep the travelling public informed of any airport news and provide assistance when needed, but also engage with people on a human level and show them we are here to help."[8]

Christopher Richards
Lead Social Media Strategist,
Vancouver Airport Authority

INSTAGRAM

Instagram hit one billion monthly active users in 2018. Its monumental growth can be attributed to Stories, new video features, and advanced advertiser options.[9]

With these developments, and the fact the platform has the highest user engagement rates among major social networks, Instagram offers significant opportunities for government agencies in 2019.

We've already discussed how unique visual content can drive engagement on social media and help a government agency meet its commitment to its citizens. The City of Surrey, B.C. has seen success fulfilling its mandate by incorporating user-generated content (UGC) into its strategy.

Social media lead Lise Oakley says, "By curating our feed with UGC, we have reached more people and shared citizen experiences from various perspectives, which has built a two-way relationship with our residents and ultimately made us more accessible."

With a #mycityofsurrey ambassador campaign in progress and engagement and reach on the rise, the City of Surrey shows what's possible when a government agency collaborates with its residents on social media.

SNAPCHAT

While Instagram Stories surpassed Snapchat last year with more than 400 million daily active users, the network is still a go-to for a broad youth audience.[10] Seventy-nine percent of teens have an account—and due to addictive features like Snapstreaks (which track how many days in a row two users Snap each other), 44 percent say they would pick Snapchat over other networks if they had to choose just one.[11]

While Snapchat might not be right for every government agency, many are seeing success in reaching younger people. The City of Santa Clarita in California is one example. Social media team member Frankie Rios describes the team's successful adoption of geofilters (a hallmark of Snapchat posts) as follows: "Not only do Geofilters give our events more publicity, they also provide a sense of innovation and attention to detail that our citizens appreciate about their city".[12]

Depending on the demographics your agency serves, Snapchat can be an effective way to exceed expectations and meet your community where they already enjoy spending time online.

LINKEDIN

Now under the ownership of Microsoft and reaching 575+ million professionals from 200 countries, LinkedIn has been working hard to introduce new capabilities and features for its users—and escaping the security controversies plaguing other social platforms.[13]

The launch of Talent Insights, a new self-serve analytics tool, will tap into LinkedIn's extensive data to deliver information on demand to the millions of HR and recruitment professionals using the network. These insights will help LinkedIn's professional users understand market trends and skill availability, and will improve their ability to refine and target their searches.

An aging workforce continues to cause headaches for government, and has been listed as the number one concern in recent research.[14] LinkedIn is the primary platform to modernize and re-energize hiring practices. As well as using tools like Talent Insights, take the time to build your employer brand by sharing relevant and engaging content on the platform.

In British Columbia, BC Ferries has produced a series of #MeetTheCrew videos that take viewers behind the scenes to learn more about different job opportunities at the organization. It's an effective way to provide more information and get the conversation started with prospective employees.

YOUTUBE

YouTube grew from 1.6 billion to 1.9 billion active users in 2018, a number that shows no signs of slowing.[15] Global appetite for video continues to increase, making it a key area for government agencies to invest in 2019. Hosting your videos on YouTube makes it easy for your citizens to find what they're looking for, and also encourages them to explore the other content within your video library.

Buncombe County, North Carolina' posts content constituents want in a format they appreciate. The county's B:60 video series comprises 60-second videos intended to "provide you with a compact way to stay up-to-date with important County news and information".[16] By cataloguing the videos into a named series, the county makes it easy for residents to explore similar content and learn more about the community they live in.

ENDNOTES

1   Vox. The Facebook and Cambridge Analytica Scandal, explained with a simple diagram. 2018.

2   Facebook. Mark Zuckerberg post. 2018.

3   Edelman. Edelman Trust Barometer 2018: Global Report. 2018.

4   Facebook. Round Rock, Texas - City Government. 2018

5   Twitter. Creating new policies together. 2018.

6   YVR. Who We Are. 2019.

7   Vancouver Courier. Vancouver Airport wins 'Best Banter' in Twitter Canada Awards. 2018.

8   Vancouver Courier. Vancouver Airport wins 'Best Banter' in Twitter Canada Awards. 2018.

9   TechCrunch. Instagram hits 1 billion monthly users, up from 800M in September. 2018.

10   Business Insider. Instagram's Stories feature is now twice as big as Snapchat, with 400 million daily users. 2018.

11   Recode. Snapchat is still the network of choice for U.S. teens—and Instagram is Facebook's best shot at catching up. 2017.

12   National Association of Government Web Professionals. Why You Should Use Snapchat for your Agency. 2017.

13   LinkedIn. The 2018 LinkedIn Top Startups are Changing The Way We Work. 2018.

14   National Association of State Chief Information Officers. Get in the Game: Understanding Today's Workforce Playing Field. 2018.

15   YouTube. Mid-year Update on Our Five Creator Priorities for 2018. 2018.

16   Buncombe County North Carolina. Communications - BCTV - B:60. 2018.

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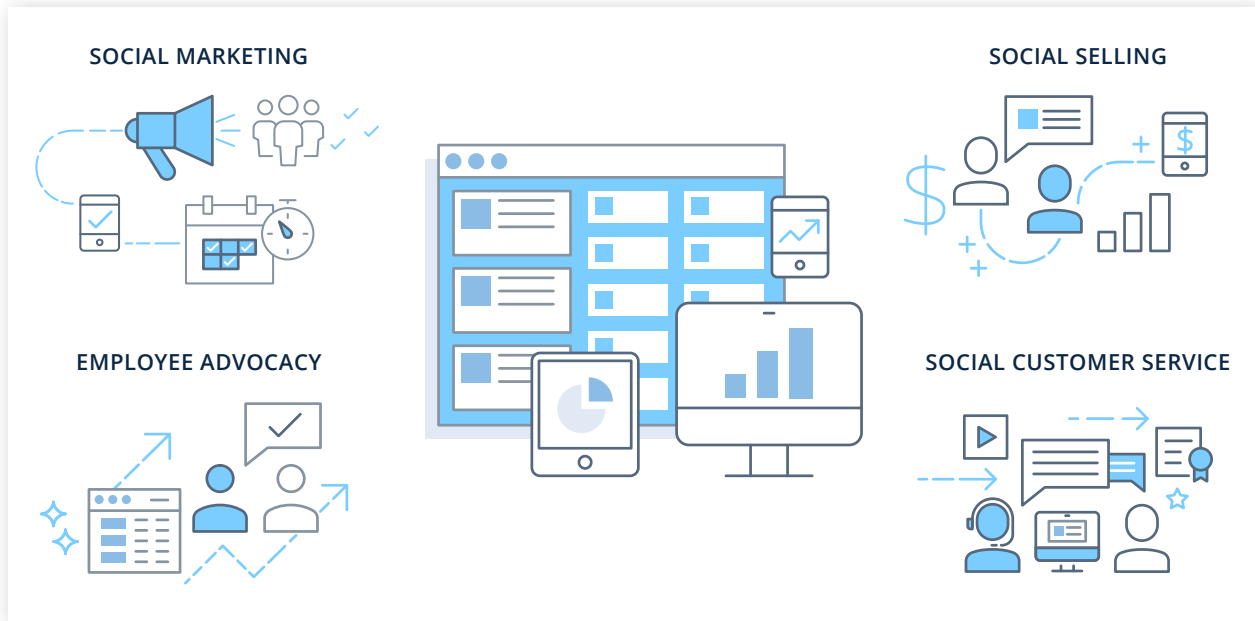
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