

Tweeting your way into citizens' hearts: Social media & government offices

From Kelly Giles, Social Media Strategist – November 2009

Jane Citizen's top 5 tips:

1. Interact! Citizens want to know that they can send you a message, post a comment or "@ reply" to your account, and they'll get a response. If you use social media as another one-way communication channel, you're losing its power.
2. Don't begin your updates (tweets, Facebook status updates, etc.) with your office's name. For example, "AnyCounty News: Update continued..." If someone has found your page, they already know they're looking at AnyCounty News.
3. Your social media sites shouldn't read like press releases. They should contain short, helpful (sometimes fun!) pieces of information. It's also OK to share things that would interest your readers but aren't directly related to your office.
4. Put a name — and maybe even a face — with your accounts. It adds a human element to your digital presence. If you have a group of people working on your accounts, list them.
5. Strike the balance between being too quiet (and seeming uninvolved) and flooding your readers' screens. Updating 2-3 times a day is plenty.

10 ideas for promoting your presence to Jane Citizen:

1. Put your social media links and icons front and center on the homepage of your website.
2. Include links and icons on any communications (bills, newsletters, etc.) that your office sends to citizens.
3. Link to your social media accounts from staff members' e-mail signatures.
4. Go one step further than a Twitter icon and have a running stream of your tweets on your homepage or blog.
5. Cross-promote your accounts. List your Twitter and blog links on your Facebook page. Post articles from your blog to Facebook and Twitter.
6. Let your audience help you promote. Make it easy for people to share your blog posts by using a Share widget.
7. Place additional information on your blog, and link citizens to the post to find out more information.
8. Buy a Facebook ad targeted at Facebook users within your city.
9. Send a press release to your local news outlets about your social media use.
10. Partner with one or several other offices to cross-promote each other's social media presence.