This month’s PR Tips Package is focused on county road agencies and social media. For county road agencies that do not have a presence on social media, there are step-by-step instructions on how to set up Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. For agencies already on social media, enclosed are some best practices and tips for growing your audience.

In this package you will find:

- PR recommendations document with best social media practices
- Sample social media posts
- One-page “Guide to navigating Facebook”
- One-page “Guide to navigating Twitter”
- One-page “Guide to navigating Instagram”
- Advanced social media tips
- Social media glossary
- County road agency social media resources

BROUGHT TO YOU BY...

CRA’s Public Relations Committee

Rachael Cieslik
Communications Specialist
Phone: 517.482.1189
Email: rcieslik@micountyroads.org
Date: February 26, 2021
To: Managing Directors, PR Staff
From: Rachael Cieslik, Communications Specialist
CRA, Public Relations Committee
Subject: February 2021 PR Tips Package

In our increasingly digitalized world, it’s more important than ever to maintain a social media presence. Social media is a powerful tool for engagement, and without it, county road agencies miss out on valuable interactions with their audiences. By sharing meaningful information via social media, agencies can better connect with the community.

This PR Tips package includes information about how to get started with social media. It will highlight best practices and provide strategies for growing your social media presence. For those of you already on social media, you’ll also find advanced tips for boosting your success.

Please feel free to contact me for additional help or resources at 517.482.1189 or rcieslik@micountyroads.org.

Sincerely,

Rachael Cieslik
Communications Specialist
CRA PR Recommendations for Social Media

In many corners of the world, social media has taken the place of face-to-face interactions and telephone conversations. That also applies to county road agencies. While some residents will call for information, many want talk-free information from you. That’s where social media comes in. Adding more communication channels allows you to better connect with your audience.

Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are popular, easy-to-manage social media channels that county road agencies can use following some of these tips:

- **Set social media goals and objectives**: You want these to be measurable, relevant and attainable. Don’t strive for one million likes on Facebook! Start with growing your followers a certain percentage over time.
- **Find your voice**: Having a consistent “voice” on social media will ensure your brand is intact and your messages reach their intended audience. This might mean one person is mostly responsible for creating content.
- **Create a social media calendar**: It’s important to have some structure to what and when you post to your accounts. Make a calendar of important dates and what you plan to post to avoid scrambling for content. If you manage your accounts through social media managing websites like Hootsuite or Sprout Social, you can pre-schedule posts, too.
- **Be prepared for spontaneous content**: Be open to unplanned posts related to a weather event or construction project. Be flexible!
- **Always include a photo or a video in your post**: This makes the post more engaging and visually appealing.
- **Be present and responsive**: Your social media channels are ideal places to reach your audience, so be sure to pay them the attention they deserve. You wouldn’t ignore someone who walks into your office. Be sure to answer questions that “walk onto” your social media accounts.
- **Be professional, but know when enough is enough**: It’s possible – and likely – you’ll encounter negativity on your accounts. Be professional in your approach to these comments, seek to educate and know when to stop engaging with someone being unreasonable. Your best final response would be to offer your agency’s email address for any further discussion. In rare instances, you may wish to block a destructive poster.
Sample Social Media Posts

USE VISUALS WITH ALL YOUR POSTS!

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SUMMER CONSTRUCTION

Excited to say we put Michigan road funding to good use this year! Work on XX Road is complete. #FixMIRoads

Thanks for your patience this summer as we go to work #FixingMIRoads! Here’s what we’re working on: [project details].

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WINTER MAINTENANCE

Seeing green? Lighted wing sticks and green lights are innovations XXX County Road Commission/Department uses to make their snowplows easier to see.

Keep our roads and snowplow drivers safe – never pass on the right! #DontCrowdThePlow

Roads and fries...nothing in common, right? Wrong. Too much salt on either, and it’s bad news. Learn more about how county road agencies use road salt: [link to Fall 2020 Crossroads article – https://mydigitalpublication.com/publication/?m=60846&i=670696&p=28].

Buckle up – it’s going to be a wild ride these next few days. [Include information about upcoming storm or link to news article about weather.] Look for us out on the road and remember to slow down!

We have XX trucks out on the road right now on XX routes across the county. Please be patient – We’re coming to a road near you. To report concerns, call XXX-XXX-XXXX.
SEASONAL WEIGHT RESTRICTIONS

Flowers are popping up…and so are seasonal weight restrictions. Check out which roads are no-go’s for heavy loads: https://micountyroads.org/business/seasonal-weight-restrictions/.

Seasonal weight restrictions have been reinstated for some roads under our jurisdiction. View restrictions here: https://micountyroads.org/business/seasonal-weight-restrictions/.

RIGHT-OF-WAY

You think mowing your lawn takes a long time? Imagine mowing billions of square feet each summer! It’s just one of the many things county road agencies do to maintain right-of-way.

County road agencies always have your safety in mind, so that’s why they maintain right-of-way, space on the sides of a road, to protect vehicles that veer off.

GRAVEL MAINTENANCE

Gravel roads need love, too! Regular maintenance ensures safe driving conditions. This can include applying extra gravel or dust control materials and grading the roadbed. Questions about gravel road maintenance? Contact us at [phone number] or [email address].

Did you know that “dirt” roads aren’t actually made of dirt? Unpaved roads are really made of gravel, sand and clay. XXX County Road Commission/Department works hard to keep your gravel roads smooth and safe. Learn more about how we do it at [insert link to website FAQ page].
Creating a page:
Takes as little as 15 minutes.
In any browser, visit: facebook.com/pages/create
Click Get Started on the Business or Brand option. (This is different than creating a personal page).
Fill out all the information needed.
Follow onscreen instructions as they direct you.
You will be asked to edit your profile by adding a profile picture and cover photo. Make these photos relevant to your road agency, such as your road agency seal/logo.

Making sure your page is published:
Click Settings at the top of page.
From the General area, click “Page Visibility.”
Click Page Published.
Then click Save Changes.

Securing a verified page:
Click Settings at top of page.
From the General area, click Page Verification.
Click Verify this Page.
Enter your language, country and public listed phone number for your agency.
Click Call Me Now, which prompts Facebook to call you with a 4-digit verification code.
You will receive a 4-digit code. Enter that code and then click Continue.

How to grow your “friends” list:
Make sure you have 3-5 posts on your page before inviting anyone to like your page. These could be a welcoming post, a few photos introducing people at the road agency, and/or a post shared from another road agency.
Use an eye-catching cover and profile picture. No blurry pictures!
A profile picture is roughly 170 by 170 pixels.
A cover photo is roughly 820 by 462 pixels.
Add/list all other social media account “handles” to your page in your About section.
When finished with the page, you can invite people to “Like” your new page. Be sure to like other pages so they’ll like yours in return.
Include your new Facebook page’s URL on your county’s website/flyers/email/etc.
Use giveaways to gain more likes. Make a competition for the “best road picture.” Whoever gets the most likes on their picture wins a free T-shirt or a mug. Be creative.
Be mindful of how many times you post; don’t overpost but don’t go silent for long either.
Use inspiring and humorous quotes and memes (find some online) to capture your target audience’s attention.
Post videos of a snowplow plowing snow, crews laying asphalt, etc. People enjoy seeing crews in action.
Add the Facebook logo and your page link to your website.
Monitor dialogue.

How and what to post on Facebook:
How to post:
Put your cursor into the large blank white box located at the top of your page.
Begin typing message into box.
(Make sure you’re posting under the page’s name by clicking the profile picture [in the top right corner] and select to post as your page.)
Before posting, read and re-read your post for any spelling and grammar mistakes.
Click Post.

What to post:
Updates about your road agency, such as operations updates during weather events, and construction updates.
Keep posts short but use lots of detail.
Post using appealing pictures as well as videos.
Be educational, informative and humorous when appropriate.
Post about milestones.
A guide to navigating Twitter

Creating an account:
Takes as little as 15 minutes.
In any browser, visit twitter.com.
Click the blue Sign Up button.
Insert your name, email, and password. Use your real name and email as you will customize your profile later. If you already have a personal account, you will have to use your business email for this new Twitter account.
Complete the form. You can change your username here or do it later.
Click Create My Account.
Click Next.
You will have to follow 3 users for the selection they give you. You can unfollow them once you’re set up.
Twitter will then ask you to follow 5 more people, but you can skip it and move on.
Next, you’ll need to confirm your email. Find the email from Twitter that includes a link. Click on the link and your new account should be confirmed.
Go to your profile and click Add Picture (aka avatar). Add a picture that clearly represents your road agency (logo is preferable). You can do the same thing with your header photo, which should be relevant to your county road agency.
Go to your profile and find an option to edit your “Bio.” You have 160 characters to describe your road agency, and you should include your website URL and Facebook URL.
Make sure to click Save Changes to ensure your information is saved and your account is created and activated.

How to tweet:

How to tweet
Click the large box at top of page.
Begin typing your message.
Click Tweet to publish.

How to retweet
Open the tweet you wish to retweet.
Click on the double arrow icon.
Add a comment and tag the account you’re retweeting by including their handle with the “@” in the comment.
Click Retweet.

What to tweet
Visuals, such as videos and up to 4 images in each tweet.
Ask questions.
Retweet and comment on users’ posts regarding your agency.
Let the audience know about news (ex: road conditions, construction, accidents, rush hour commute).
Congratulate an employee.
Memes.
Shoutouts/appreciative tweets to other road agencies.
Post open job listings.

How to grow your followers:
Hashtags (#) are a large part of Twitter. They help boost your engagement when it comes to other people seeing your Tweets and they’re fun! Let your creativity take over and make a #funhashtag in your next tweet.
Engage with other people and fellow followers.
Make sure your posts can be retweeted. Photos and videos help greatly.
Retweet followers’ content.
Follow as many pertinent accounts as you can: other county road agencies, associations, commissioners, townships, public safety agencies, media.
Only follow users who value what you have to say.
Tweet informational and enticing content.
Add your Twitter handle to your email, flyers, website, etc.
Retweet other users’ content and tag them by including their handle in the retweet comment.
Have an engaging bio that includes your website and Facebook URLs as well as a little history.
Share what other road agencies are doing, the weather/road conditions, new updates that pertain to the road and people’s routes.
Users who tweet more tend to have more followers. Tweet often but within reason.
Share happy/positive information, but also share information the public needs.
Add Twitter logo to website.
Creating a page:
Takes as little as 15 minutes.

From a computer:
1. In any browser, visit: instagram.com.
2. Click Sign Up, enter your email address, create a username and password, or click Log in with Facebook to sign up with your Facebook account.
3. If you register with an email, click Sign up. If you register with Facebook, you’ll be prompted to log into your Facebook account if you’re currently logged out.

From the app:
1. Download the app from the App Store (iPhone) or Google Play Store (Android).
2. Once the app is installed, tap to open it.
3. Tap Sign Up With Email or Phone Number (Android) or Create New Account (iPhone), then enter your email address or phone number (which will require a confirmation code) and tap Next. You can also tap Log in with Facebook to sign up with your Facebook account.
4. If you register with your email or phone number, create a username and password, fill out your profile info and then tap Next. If you register with Facebook, you’ll be prompted to log into your Facebook account if you’re currently logged out.

How and what to post:

How to post:
Note: You can’t take or upload photos from a desktop computer.
1. To upload a photo or take a new one, first tap at the bottom of the screen.
2. To upload a photo from your phone’s library, tap Library (iOS) or Gallery (Android) at the bottom of the screen and select the photo you’d like to share.
3. To take a new photo, tap Photo at the bottom of the screen, then tap . You can tap to switch between front and rear-facing cameras and to adjust flash.
4. Once you’ve taken or uploaded a photo, you can add effects or filters, a caption and your location before posting. You can also post a video.

Before posting, read and re-read your post for any spelling and grammar mistakes.
Click Post.

What to post:
Updates about your road agency, such as operations updates during weather events, and construction updates.
Keep posts short but use lots of detail.
Be educational, informative and humorous when appropriate.
Post about milestones.

How to grow your followers:
Make sure you have 3-5 posts on your page before inviting anyone to like your page. These could be a welcoming post, a few photos introducing people at the road agency, and/or a post shared from another road agency.
Use an eye-catching profile picture. No blurry pictures! Your profile picture should be at least 110 by 110 pixels.
Include your new Instagram handle on your county’s website/flyers/email/etc.
Use giveaways to gain more likes. Make a competition for the “best road picture” and whoever gets the most likes on their picture wins a free T-shirt or a mug. Be creative.
Be mindful of how many times you post; don’t overpost, but don’t go silent for long either.
Use inspiring and humorous quotes and memes (find some online) to capture your target audience’s attention.
Post videos of a snowplow plowing snow, crews laying asphalt, etc. People enjoy seeing crews in action.
Add the Instagram logo and link to your website.
Monitor dialogue.
Be creative with hashtags.
Look out for trending hashtags and use them when appropriate.
Write descriptive captions.
Experiment with Instagram Stories.
Follow other accounts and like their photos. This will help you grow your visibility to other users.
Advanced Social Media Tips

- Lay out plans and objectives for your social media accounts. Figure out what you want to accomplish with each.

- Create a separate social media strategy for each platform. Tailoring content according to platform helps reach users in a more audience-focused way.

- Consider using a social media management platform like Hootsuite or Sprout Social to schedule, monitor and analyze post performance.

- Identify your audience and cater to their preferences.

- Research your audience and create a posting schedule accordingly.

- Follow other county road agency accounts to stay updated and see what’s trending in the field.

- Create your own hashtags and advertise them on other promotional materials such as flyers, brochures and your website.

- Try posting videos instead of photos.

- Experiment with live tweeting at events.

- Post multiple times a day.

- Create polls or giveaways.

- Interact with other social media users by liking, sharing and commenting on their posts. Doing so increases engagement and grows your audience.

- Measure your results and impact via analytics platforms such as Hootsuite.

- Check out the Tool Crib in the MyCRA section of the CRA website. There you’ll find stock photos, illustrations, graphics and other resources you can post to your social media pages. You also have access to past PR Tips packages, which include sample social media posts on a variety of topics. Visit micountyroads.org, sign into MyCRA and click on “Tool Crib” in the lefthand menu.
Social Media Glossary

Cover photo: The horizontal photo that stretches across the top of a Facebook page.

Direct message: A private Twitter message.

Engagement: The interactions – likes, comments, shares, etc. – between people on social media.

Facebook: A social media platform that allows people to post, share content and engage with others.

Favorite: An indication that a person likes a tweet, communicated by pressing the heart icon on Twitter.

Follower: A Twitter user that subscribes to your account to receive updates.

Friend: A person you connect with on Facebook.

Handle: The term used to describe the name of your social media account. For example, CRA’s Twitter handle is @MiCountyRoads.

Hashtag: A word or phrase preceded by the # symbol. Hashtags are used to categorize information and make it easily discoverable on the social network.

Hootsuite: A social media management platform that allows users to schedule, monitor and manage social media posts.

Instagram: A photo-sharing app that allows users to take photos, apply filters and create posts to share.

Like: An expression of support used by Facebook and Instagram users to indicate their approval of a post.

Mention: A Twitter term describing an instance in which a user tags another user’s handle or account name. Mentions often attribute content or start discussion.

Newsfeed: The homepage of a social media account, containing updates from the user’s followers/friends.

Profile picture: An image that represents a social media account user.

Post: A social media status update.

Reply: A response to another user’s tweet.

Retweet: A tweet that is reshared to another person’s social media followers.

Sprout Social: A social media management platform used to track and control social media accounts.

Tag: A keyword added to a social media post used to categorize related content. Tags link back to the account targeted by the update.

Trend/trending: Popular hashtags or topics on a social media platform.

Tweet: A 280-character Twitter message.

Twitter: A social media platform where users communicate with each other via 280-character messages.
Thinking about starting a social media account? Need some advice? These county road agency employees know their way around the digital space and have some tips to share. Feel free to reach out with questions on how to make your county road agency’s social media successful.

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