Social Media Best Practices

Managing Accounts

Determining Roles

The best person to manage social media is someone in your office/group who's in charge of communicating with the public in other ways (by phone, in person, through newsletters, etc.). A reliable volunteer under the supervision of a college employee may also be an option. The person you choose should:

1. Have good communication skills, including strong spelling and grammar
2. Have the time and knowledge to use the tools
3. Have the knowledge and authority to represent the organization:
   o Understand your goals and mission
   o Be familiar with the audience
4. Be familiar with CAES and UGA social media policies (see below)

You should have more than one person who has administrative access to your account(s), so that access can be maintained long-term. Also, try to appoint a team lead who will coordinate the strategy and stay in touch with the CAES Social Media Team.

Guidelines

You can also refer to the **UGA guidelines**. In general, the UGA guidelines supersede those of the college. Here is a quick overview:

- Before creating any pages or accounts to conduct university business, secure the approval of the [CAES OMC](#).
- Keep event information for minors/4-H secured.
- Post quality content regularly, but don't over update.
- Monitor comments and respond promptly. Social media is not a one-way broadcast.
- Keep the goals of building and strengthening relationships and promoting the college in mind.
- Avoid running contests or promotions that result in prizes on your account.
- Understand copyright and fair use laws.

- Use common sense and a professional tone. Take responsibility for what you say.
- Get help from [CAES OMC](#) if you are unsure or confused.
- Be accurate. If you do make an error, correct it quickly and visibly (deleting the original post is discouraged).
- Don't act as an "expert." When possible, link to the original source.
- Don't post sensitive information or information that isn't a matter of public record.
- Don't post about personal opinions, non-college related issues or unrelated promotions.

Platforms

It's better to focus on one platform and do it well than struggle to manage multiple platforms. Here are some things to know when making your decision:

- **Facebook** is about quality content, not quantity. It allows you to post text, pictures, videos and links to other online content. It is the tool most of our audience is familiar with and allows users to comment on and share your posts.
- **Twitter** is useful for frequent, brief posts about news and events or links to publications or websites. It can also be used to give moment-by-moment updates about events, such as conferences, field days or classes as they are happening.
- **Instagram** is best for visuals, supporting photos and short videos through traditional posts and Instastories. Links do not work in posts, but will work in the profile section of your account.
- **YouTube** is a way to share instructional and promotional videos. It can house longform videos that you can share via links on other social media platforms. It also allows for comments.
- **Blogs** function like a newsletter on a website, but can be configured to allow comments for questions and feedback. This may be a great alternative to writing a newspaper column, but may take more work to build and retain an audience.

Note: Adding new posts to a page too often can be just as bad as never updating it. People do not appreciate having their social space being bombarded with updates. A good rule of thumb is to post when you have something valuable to share, which should be at least two or three times a week (otherwise social media may not be for you).

Facebook

You will need a *__Profile Account__* to administer groups and pages. Use your personal profile if you already have a Facebook account, or you will need to create one. You can make other Facebook users admins of the account by [managing roles](#). It is against Facebook's terms to use more than one personal profile to represent yourself. Keep in mind that you must be 13 to have a Facebook account, which is required for accessing a Facebook group.

Review the kinds of accounts you can set up below, and if you are still unsure, please [contact CAES OMC](#).

Account Types
Use a:

- *__Closed Group__* for clubs involving minors (including 4-H), or if you need to protect info or restrict membership. You can have as many groups as you want.
- *__Page__* if you plan to share general information for the public and want access to promotional tools, insights and analytics. You should limit page creation in order to have as wide of an audience as possible.
- *__Facebook event__* through your page or group. Do not create *pages* for events.
- DO NOT set up a *personal profile account* or use your personal profile to represent your organization/group. This violates Facebook's terms.

Frequency
- **Page**: One time per day, up to five or six days a week.
- **Group**: As needed, but more than four times a week may be too much. The key is to encourage engagement between group members.
- **Event**: Only if details of the event have changed, so attendees are aware.

Accessibility
- Add Alt text for each image that you post.
  - If you're posting within Facebook, once you've added a photo, click the three dots next to the X in the upper right hand corner of the image. There should be an option to edit alt text there.
  - If you're using a content scheduler like Hootsuite, there is an option to do this here. Be as descriptive as possible, imagine someone is describing each image to you.

- Also consider including a hashtag such as #imagedescription or #videodescription at the very bottom of your post, followed by the alt text for each image there.

Twitter

You do not need to have a personal twitter account to create an account for your organization. "Business" and "personal" accounts are the same on this platform. Anyone who has the login information can administer the account. Note: Faculty considering creating a public account for professional work and thought leadership should use phrasing such as "opinions are my own" in the bio.

Content must be less than 280 characters, though 140 characters or less is still recommended for the platform.

Review the kinds of accounts you can set up below, and if you are still unsure, please [contact CAES OMC](#).

Account Types
Use a:

- [*Protected Account*](#) for clubs involving minors (including 4-H), or if you need to protect info or restrict membership.
- [*Public Account*](#) if you plan to share general information for the public.

Frequency

- As frequently as you would like, but at least once per day, every day if possible.

Accessibility

- Add Alt text for each image that you post.
  - If you're posting from within Twitter, once you add an image there is a little button in the bottom right corner that says +ALT, which allows you to enter the alt text for each image.
  - If you're using a content scheduler like Hootsuite, there is an option to do this here. Be as descriptive as possible, imagine someone is describing each image to you.

Instagram

You do not need to have a personal Instagram account to create an account for your organization. "Business" and "personal" accounts are different on this platform, but managed in the same way. Like Twitter, anyone with the login information can administer the account.

Note: Videos shared on the Instagram account's main page have to be a minute or less, unless you want to share it on IG TV.

Review the kinds of accounts you can set up below, and if you are still unsure, please contact CAES OMC.

Account Types
Use a:
- *Public Account* if you plan to share general information for the public.
- *Private Account* for clubs involving minors (including 4-H), or if you need to protect info or restrict membership. Instagram defaults to public accounts, so you will need to change your privacy settings as soon as you create the account.
- *Business Account* if you want to create promoted (paid) posts and ads to expand your reach. Instagram defaults to personal accounts, so you will need to change your account settings as soon as you create it.

Note: You can switch between these account types at any time; they are not set in stone.

Frequency
- **Posts**: Three to five times a week. Visually interesting posts with little to no text on the image perform best.
- **Stories**: As frequently as you would like, but at least once per day, every day if possible.

Note: Instagram does not allow links in posts. When you need to include a link, add "Link in bio" to your post's description and be sure to add the link to your account's bio as the "Website" in settings. If you'd like to have multiple links, consider creating a free account with LinkTree.

Accessibility
- Add Alt text for each image that you post.
  - Within Instagram, this is located under "Advanced settings" when you're creating a post.

- o If you're using a content scheduler like Hootsuite, there is an option to do this here. Be as descriptive as possible, imagine someone is describing each image to you.

YouTube

YouTube lets you watch and like videos and subscribe to channels without setting up an account. In order to have a public presence on YouTube, you need to create a YouTube channel (even if you already have a Google account). This allows you to upload videos, comment, or make playlists. Like Twitter and Instagram, anyone with the login information can administer the account.

[Contact CAES OMC](#) to have your video uploaded to the CAES or Extension YouTube channel.

Account Types
Use a
- *Personal Channel* if only you want to manage it, using your Google account.
- *Brand Channel* if you want to use a different name on YouTube than your Google Account, as well as allow multiple users to manage it. To create a brand channel, you need a Brand account.

Frequency
- When you have new content (preferably a minimum of once or twice a month).

Accessibility
- Make sure the videos you upload are captioned correctly for accessibility purposes. The auto caption function from YouTube doesn't always pull the information being said correctly, especially if there is scientific wording.
- Consider whether the content is kid friendly or for a primarily adult audience, and categorize it appropriately - there is an option to choose "for kids" when you're uploading the video to YouTube.

Blogs

View blog specific support services and best practices from the Office of Information Technology.

Creating Content

All it takes to create written content is a keyboard. Photos, video and graphics require some additional tools – here are some tips to get you started with each type of content:

- **Writing**: While you can type content easily, be sure to check it for grammar and spelling prior to posting. A free tool you can use is [Grammarly](#), an extension you can add to your Chrome browser.
- **Photos**: Use a camera or newer smartphone to take pictures. To align with the CAES brand, avoid using filters or editing the photo.
- **Videos**: Gather video content from events. Use [WeVideo](#) to edit and cut videos to the correct size and length for each platform.
- **Graphics**: Use [Canva](#) to create graphics, consider starting with the templates from CAES OMC.

Posting

While we have recommendations for how frequently to post for each platform, feel out your audience. Depending on their level of interaction, you may need to post more or less. You can even ask them how often they want to see new content. If your posts are not time sensitive, you should space them out by scheduling them in advance.

Even if you are only posting once a week, you should still check your account daily to monitor and reply to comments.

Content

Use social media to post event info, educational info and pictures. When posting information regarding minors, do not disclose all the event details. Leave some information out so people will have to contact you to learn more. Do not tag minors in pictures.

You can also share links to websites, articles and publications. Another idea is to share posts from other accounts.

Try to keep text short and to the point.

Best Practices

In general, you can help your account succeed by:

- Taking time to think about your strategy.
- Posting relevant information your audience wants to see (ask them if you don't know).
- Asking questions to start conversations/solicit feedback.
- Monitoring Web stats to see what people are looking at.
- Being a real person.

Many articles have been written online about how to successfully engage through social media. We encourage you to do some research, but you may have to try several things before you find what works best with your audience.

For Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, it's also a best practice to include hashtags and tag accounts when relevant. Each word in a hashtag should be capitalized and limit hashtags to 1-2 per post. For Instagram, you can also comment additional hashtags on your own posts.

Consider creating a free account with software that allows you to schedule posts across platforms, like [Later](#), [Hootsuite](#) and [Sendible](#).

Pitfalls to Avoid

Chances that you'll run into trouble using social media increase if the person managing your page:

- Does not monitor the page daily.
- Has inappropriate content on his/her personal page.
- Frames their personal opinions as opinions of the college.
- Argues with commenters.
- Has no plan for dealing with problems.

Be aware of online privacy concerns, especially for minors. Also, be sure you have a plan for handling accusatory comments or individuals who want to attack the organization and/or other users.

Measuring Success

Most social media platforms have detailed analytics and statistics available to help you gauge how your content and pages are performing. Accessing this information depends on the platform:

- [Facebook](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [YouTube](#)

If your followers are interacting with you online, keep up the good work!

Questions?

View the the **UGA social engagement and moderation guide** for guidance on how to handle issues you are likely to encounter. Contact CAES OMC if the issue cannot be resolved.