Georgia State University
Social Media Toolbox

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Georgia State's social media channels reach hundreds of thousands of people each day. They have become our most timely and relevant avenues to reach a variety of audiences. The content we post changes the way the community perceives the university. Georgia State's social media accounts are managed by Public Relations and Marketing Communications through an enterprise system called Hootsuite. This system, accessed through the university's Single Sign On login, allows users access to university level content through the Hootsuite Content Library. Contact Terry Coniglio for access to Hootsuite. University accounts created and managed outside of the Hootsuite Enterprise system are in violation of university policy.

Two key reminders: do not delete comments from university accounts. If your department experiences a social media crisis, reach out to PRMC for guidance on how to respond.

Please read the guidelines below for best social media practices.

Tool Box

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Steps to laying a foundation and defining goals

Before you determine whether you need a university account, sit down with your team and answer (in writing) the following questions:

1. Identify the person or persons who will have primary responsibility for populating, maintaining and monitoring your site. Ensure they have the time and enthusiasm to devote to this project. List the team members.

2. Identify your audience to help you tailor your content and choose the right tool (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, etc.). List your primary audiences and conduct preliminary research to find what social networks they use.

3. Determine your goals and how you will measure the success of your efforts before you start. Increased traffic to your website? Better communication with current students? List how you plan to measure the account's success, and the tools you'll use to track that success (Facebook Insights, Hootsuite's reports, develop your own metrics, etc.…).

4. Identify the content you plan to share. Is it primarily news updates, research developments, or networking information? Photographs? Video? List the content topics you will be sharing via social media and give them a priority order. How does this content relate to your audience? How does the content relate to your goals?

5. Before you launch anything, start to listen to the current conversation**.** Survey the social media landscape for the "thought leaders" in your field. What are people saying about your subject matter? What are people saying about you? Who is saying it? How does your audience like to be communicated with (cultural differences, industry specific vocabulary, etc.)? List the topics, people and sites that are leading the conversations that are relevant to your audience and goals**.**

6. Identify a simple and descriptive name for your profile that clearly identifies your affiliation with Georgia State University. Do not identify yourself simply as "GSU," "Georgia State University," or "Panthers" as that implies you are speaking for the entire institution. Be sure that all design elements are in line with the University's [Identity Guide](). We will provide you with social media icons for your accounts. Don't use the university logo as it implies you are speaking for the entire institution. Decide on a tone and voice you would like to communicate with.

7. Set a timeline for when you will conduct an evaluation of your account's success, using the goals and measures identified above. At that time, be prepared to realign your accounts content. Ongoing evaluation should also be part of your strategy.

Develop a Strategy

1. **We are here to help**. Before you create accounts or take over existing accounts, set up a meeting with PRMC's social media team. The team can help you determine what is the best course of action, go over the university guidelines and provide you with access to the university's Hootsuite enterprise account.

2. **Integrate Social Media in Communications Plan**.   Social Media should not be a separate entity from your current communication plan but rather compliment it. Develop a timeline or calendar of what content will be updated and when. How does this content work with your current marketing and communication efforts?

3. **Promote Your Network**. How will people know about your Social Media efforts? Simply having a social media presence is not enough; you have to build a following. Incorporate your social media links on webpage, printed material, e-mail signatures, newsletters, etc. What other creative ways can you build a following?

4. **Plan for the Unexpected**. When an unexpected or real time update has to go up (example: event canceled, watch one of our professors right now on CNN, comment responses, etc…) who is to do this and how? These updates may come outside of working hours so staff members who will be responsible for these updates need access to the appropriate tools and log in information to do so. In the event of a university emergency, the main accounts will handle crisis communication. If your department or unit is experiencing a crisis, please contact PRMC before posting anything on social media

5. **Who's Got Your Back?** Have a backup system. Make sure you have a social media back up system in place. If the person who generally handles social media is out of the office, someone else on the team should have log in access and be trained on how to monitor and update the pages.

6. **Do Not Delete Comments.** Have a comment response plan. Both positive and negative comments require a response from the organization in a timely manner. Who will respond to these comments? What is your unit's acceptable time frame? Do not delete comments. If you have a question about how to respond to a comment, contact PRMC.

Getting Started

1. **Secure the approval of your department head or manager.**
   If your most senior manager has not already been involved in your planning, now is the time to include them. Share with them your clear goals and strategies. Having buy-in from your superiors will aid in the overall success of your social media efforts.

2. **Inform Public Relations and Marketing Communications** of your social media channels. E-mail Terry Coniglio (tconiglio@gsu.edu) the links to your channels/pages as well as the contact information of the staff members responsible for maintaining it. You will be added to the Hootsuite enterprise environment and will log in through Single Sign On.

3. **Create a profile.** Set up your social media accounts with the names your group agreed on during your planning phase.

4. **Experiment.** Build out your blog, Twitter stream, Facebook page or whatever you choose and spend time populating it for several weeks, sharing it with a small group who can provide comments. Have the site up and running well before you plan to launch it, so you can become comfortable with maintaining it.

5. **Launch.** You're ready to communicate! Use traditional means, such as email lists and notices on your web site, to notify your potential audiences that you have a social media presence. Also, notify others with social media presences and similar interests that your site is live – one of the best ways to do this is by linking to these sites from yours and mentioning them in your posts. Include easy-to-find links to your social media presence on your Web site. This would also be the time to implement any non-traditional campaigns to launch your site and create a buzz.

6. **Adjust.** Once your site is up and running, you will find some content is popular, some is ignored, and some is just plain cumbersome. Also, pay attention to the times of day you are posting and the feedback you get.   Use an application such as Hootsuite to schedule posts so that your audience can be reached at the times they are active on Social Media. All social media tools come with easy-to-use tracking tools, so you can see which posts are viewed and shared most, which generate comments, etc. Be prepared to re-align your strategy in response to who is viewing your site and how they are doing so.

Daily Operation

- Set aside time every day to work on Social Media. From a user perspective, it is never good to show up to a social media page that has not been updated recently. Don't just use Social Media when you have an event or new story to push out. It is not a one-way conversation. Be sure that you are doing the following daily.
  - Listen to the current conversation that day.
  - Engage with other users.
  - If relevant, post and/or schedule posts for that day
    - Don't post for the sake of posting, but at minimum you should be posting twice a week. If you don't have enough information to do so, maybe that particular channel is not the best match for your needs.
    - Do not to overload your users with updates. By monitoring your feedback, you will know when it is too much.
    - Keep your posts relevant to your audience and the time.
      - Your audience followed you expecting a certain kind of content and will get frustrated if overloaded with irrelevant information.
      - Social media moves in real time, posting an event or article that is weeks old will reflect poorly. Keep the information you are posting current within a day or two.

- Use HootSuite to help manage your efforts. The university has an enterprise account that comes with a host of resources available to you. This will give you the ability to manage your efforts from one location, schedule posts in advance, notify you when your profile needs your attention, and give statistical data. Use content from the university level Hootsuite Content Library to bolster your own account and promote the university.

- Don't spend too much time on Social Media. For most people social media is a component of their job, not their entire job. Set aside a time each day with a limit and work within those boundaries.

- Protect confidential and proprietary information. Do not post confidential or proprietary information about Georgia State or its students, employees, or alumni.

- Be as transparent as possible but think before you post. The user will view what you post as coming from the University. Make sure you have all of the facts and are prepared to answer questions on the post in an honest and responsible manner.

- Strive for accuracy and correct mistakes. Review content for grammatical and spelling errors. If a mistake is made, don't ignore it; correct it as soon as possible.

- In a crisis situation, refrain from posting on Social Media channels until official statements have been released from Public Relations and Marketing Communications. Refer all Social Media activity around the crisis to PRMC.

- Sweepstakes and contests are discouraged. Please see the [contest rules](#) for more information.