

Coast Guard Chief Petty Officers Association Social Media Strategy & Social Media Plan

STRATEGY

Introduction

Social media communications is now an entrenched part of the media landscape and online communications. It's a zero to low-cost vehicle for organizations, most particularly non-profits of all sizes and across verticals to have an effective web presence. What started out as a way to reconnect with friends and family has grown into a means for nonprofit organizations to spread awareness about key issues, mobilize supporters, raise funds and create online advocacy movements.

Communication goals

For the Coast Guard Chief Petty Officers Association and Enlisted Association, a social media online presence is imperative in a wired culture where the workplace and the way people commonly connect are through digital means. To this end, our association goals for social media are:

- To strengthen the CG CPOA/EA association brand by establishing an active social media presence.
- To empower members and supporters to share their respective chapters' and branches' missions and achievements.
- To make it easier for potential supporters to find the association online.
- Build awareness of mission by driving traffic to the website and social media properties.
- Grow the association's influence by cost-effectively acquiring new supporters, donors and volunteers.
- Harnessing the passion of the most active members and supporters by empowering them to promote the association's various programs and initiatives.

Communication objectives

- Improve CG CPOA/CGEA reputation through active use of social media sites.
- Encourage members and supporters to post timely information, stories and inquiries of relevance to their fellow members and supporters either on the "wall" or through private message (PM).
- Promote social media online presence and traffic through traditional means: word-of-mouth, email signatures, meeting agenda and minutes, CPOA convention materials, etc.

- Evangelize the association’s positive attributes and success stories to support recruitment of new members, donors and supporters.
- Support member satisfaction through empowerment of special projects that have strong potential for positive outcomes and return on investment (ROI).

Target Audiences and their social media behaviors

To have an effective social media presence, understanding who target audiences are will help determine the selection, relevance and quality of the content shared and posted. Monitoring social media behaviors helps gain a better understanding of audiences in the social space, the conversations taking place, other brands and competition. By monitoring and engaging effectively, we can establish and better define metrics aligned to goals and objectives.

Who/what	Details	People to watch/monitor
Active duty CG/military members	Social media, active association and other association members	Senior leaders, “millenials” and PCPO’s
Reservists	Potential members, inactive members	Reservists with industry and sponsor affiliations
Retirees	Potential/active/inactive members Government employees Business owners Industry employees	Industry and sponsor affiliations
Industry, corporate and business organizations	Potential sponsors and project partners	Industry, corporate and business organization leadership counterparts
Family members	Potential members; influencers	Millenials, spouses/spouse associations
Other military and veteran organizations	Competition for membership pool and project partners	Military and veteran organization leadership counterparts
Community and NGO	Partnerships/sponsors; influencers	Community and NGO leaders
News media (different genre)	Building relationships to increase visibility and improve reputation external to the association; influencers	Beat news reporters specializing in community affairs and military news.

Metrics: measuring progress

To track the effectiveness of the association's communications goals and objectives using social media networking platforms, interpreting metrics matter. Metrics can be used to help focus and improve communication efforts. For social media, these can include traffic driven back to the main website, influence and reach, as well as user interactions and engagement.

In terms of measurement, **social networking platforms** are primarily people-focused. Tracking-worthy information for these tools is translated in relation to established objectives such as:

- Community- the number of fans, group members, contacts, etc.
- Demographics- profile information on community members
- Referrals or shares- tracking the click stream from networks to content and conversion hubs
- Discussions-tracking both the number and sentiment of group discussions

For **multimedia content sharing sites** covering video, photography, documents, presentations and audio, content is aggregated to enable visitors to share on blogs, social networks, email campaigns and other communication channels. To track content sharing, metrics that matter most are related to the viral impact of content distribution including:

- Views- the number of content downloads
- SERPs- search engine ranking position for key terms on major search engines
- Subscribers- the number of those opting-in to the multimedia content stream
- Referrals- tracking the click stream from content to conversion

TACTICS: SOCIAL MEDIA PLAN

Social media networking is part of powerful communications tools that have a significant impact on organizational and professional reputations. Because they blur the lines between personal voice and institutional voice, CPOA establishes strategy and guidelines to help clarify how best to enhance and protect personal and professional reputations when participating in social media.

With CPOA/CGEA association chapters and branches growing their respective online presence through popular social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Flickr, Instagram, Slideshare, etc., the ability to use any particular platform or combination of platforms does not matter. What's important that social media managers understand the intent and purpose for each platform to support social media communication goals and objectives.

Social media management

A successful launch and management of social media networking is contained in a “hub” and “spoke” architecture of collaborated sites, if using more than one online platform. For example, a “hub” may be a traditional website, and a “spoke” is your Facebook site. A hub site doesn’t have to be a website. It could be a blog or Facebook page.

In planning an online presence, try using the following sample worksheet:

<i>Hub site</i>	<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Rollout</i>
CPOA website	Destination point for content, document downloads, membership, etc.	established
<i>Spoke site</i>	<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Rollout</i>
Facebook	Building communities, engaging colleagues, friends and	2012
LinkedIn	Business and career networking	2013- TBD

In setting up a social media site, a primary administrator or social media manager for a CPOA Chapter or CGEA Branch must be designated. Ideally, all chapter and branch officers must be part of administering to their respective social media site.

Best practices

This section applies site administrators and social media managers posting on behalf of CPOA or on any social media site in any capacity:

- **Think twice before posting:** Privacy does not exist in the world of social media. What’s typically posted online may exist forever in cyberspace. Consider the consequences of a post when it becomes widely known and how that may reflect both on the poster and the association. Search engines can turn up posts years after they are created, and comments can be forwarded or copied. Any post should be approved by two other site administrators.
- **Do not share internal documents,** conversations, emails, memos, results of meetings or other pre-decisional content that is not approved for public dissemination
- **Ensure transparency in communications.** Post and adhere to appropriate disclaimers and policies to include disclosing self, affiliation on association site and other sites.
- **Strive for accuracy:** Get the facts straight before posting them on social media. Review content for grammatical and spelling errors.
- **Be respectful:** Understand that content contributed to a social media site could encourage comments or discussion of opposing ideas. Responses should be considered carefully in light of how they would reflect on the poster and/or the association.
- **Remember your audience:** Be aware that a presence in the social media world is or easily can be made available to the public at large. This includes

prospective members, current members, current employers and colleagues, and peers. Consider this before publishing to ensure the post will not alienate, harm, or provoke any of these groups.

- **On personal sites**, identify your views as your own. If you identify yourself as a CPOA or CGEA member online, it should be clear that the views expressed are not necessarily those of the institution.
- **Imagery (photos, graphics, clipart, videos or audio)**: Similar to text posting, imagery must be relevant, accurate, and cognizant of copyright restrictions. Remember that any imagery can be easily appropriated by site visitors. To protect intellectual property, posters are strongly encouraged to add a watermark or to post images at low resolution at 72 dpi.
- **Responding in an official capacity**. Guest posters posting in their official capacity and are affiliated with the military or federal organizations should follow their respective agency or military social media handbook policies.

Content management and rules of engagement

1. Be knowledgeable and know what you are talking about. If you are going to work with social media, be involved in social media. Start your own Twitter account, Facebook page, read blogs and get engaged. That is the best way to understand the culture, tone, best practices, and protocol.
2. Post frequently, at least a minimum of 2-3 postings a week. Don't let your site sit with old information. Just like a website, keep it "fresh" with new and relevant content. Visitors won't have a reason to follow your site if there's no new content.
3. Post relevant and quality content, not just content for the sake of content. Bear in mind the association's missions, social media objectives and the audience's interest level. Suggested content to share (but not limited to), are the following:
 - a. Community service and service project events.
 - b. Personal and professional milestones: awards, advancements, promotions, retirements, etc.
 - c. Relevant links from partner or competing associations such as USO, FRA, NCOA, CWOA, MOAA, etc.
 - d. Employment events for veterans and transition information
 - e. Human interest stories in the mainstream media and select repurposed information from the Coast Guard website. Coast Guard external information is already accessible to the public, so select only information that would be of immediate interest and strongest impact to the bulk of CPOA/CGEA membership.
4. Add value. Share tips, tricks, and insights. Visitors have short attention spans and need to get something out of the time they spend on your site. Make listening to you worth their time.
5. Respond. Answer questions, thank and praise people even if it's just a few words. Make it a two way conversation.
6. Learn from your mistakes. Don't be afraid to say you were wrong and be quick to make changes when you are.
7. Have fun. If you don't like what you are doing, others will notice it and won't enjoy interacting with you.

References

Coast Guard Social Media Handbook

<http://www.dvidshub.net/publication/issues/10409>

CDC Social Media Toolkit

http://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/ToolsTemplates/SocialMediaToolkit_BM.pdf

DoD Social Media Hub

<http://www.defense.gov/socialmedia/>

10 tips for social media success

http://fcw.com/articles/2011/10/25/10-tips-agency-best-practices-social-media.aspx?sc_lang=en

Great social media policies to steal from

<http://mashable.com/2009/10/02/social-media-policy-examples/>