Social Media
Best Practices
Updated October 2020
Why Best Practices?

Best practices guides are a crucial tool for establishing and maintain brand characteristics. Adhering to best practices provide a road map to assist content creators in communicating a consistent message to the audience.

Having a uniform voice and message is critical in developing identifiable messaging, especially when you have multiple content creators posting messages. It’s this consistency across every social media channel that helps build a brand and develop brand loyalty.
Accounts

Before we can begin to create social media messages, it is terribly important to set a policy of “Best Practices” to keep track of who has access to your social media channels. As in any organization, people come and go, but you don’t want to be in the position of losing access to a social media channel due to an employee leaving.

Things to consider include...

• Keeping a list of user names/passwords in a secure location.
• Have at least two people with admin status.
• Changing passwords on a regular basis.
• Assigning roles to users. Many social media channels provide users different levels of access. Not everyone has to be, or should be, an administrator.

Goals

What do you hope to accomplish with your social media? Having a specific goal at the outset will allow you to better target your message. Goals can overlap, but it’s important to identify what the #1 objective is when posting.

Goals can include...

• Student recruitment
• Brand awareness/reputation
• Promotion
• Increase traffic to website
• Grow followers/subscribers

Who is the audience

Just as important as identifying a goal, it is also critical to understand who you are trying to reach. Different audiences will require different types of messages. Knowing who the audience is will help in determining what kinds of images, words and tone to use when posting.

Potential audiences could include...

• Current students
• Prospective students
• Parents
• Community leaders/politicians
• Higher education partners

Representing the Brand

Voice, tone, and imagery are required to be reflective of Lone Star College. The editorial, brand and logo style guides must be adhered to on all official social media channels.

Voice/Tone

Your social media voice should be consistent (One Voice) when developing your messaging. Your audience should “hear” the same person on your social media channels. That constant voice shows the audience your brand is a consistent and reliable. This includes both, photos/graphics and text. Keep in mind that each channel may have its own voice. How you communicate to your audience on Instagram, or Twitter may be different from the way you communicate on Facebook. Tone can be a powerful way to deliver your message. While the “One Voice” needs to be heard throughout your channels, the tone can vary depending on your message.

Some examples of tone include...

• Serious
• Light-hearted
• Empathetic
• Informational
• Neutral

Language

Many organizations and institutes can develop their own language, but it’s better to avoid “Academic Speak” and stick with easy to understand verbiage when it comes to social media. Academics often speak in acronyms exclusive to their own fields and becoming insider language that only they understand. Catchwords and clichés are sometimes used to help describe meaning, but precise language will provide greater clarity.

Words/phrases to avoid include...

• Stackable credentials
• Transcend
• Discourse
• Contextualize
• Juxtapose
• Unequivocal
Choosing the Right Social Media Channel

Not every message is a good fit for all channels. Something Instagram worthy may not be Facebook worthy. Choose your channel wisely.

Posting Content

Develop a social media editorial calendar. This will allow you to organize your scheduling, as well as reviewing past posts to ensure you are not over posting a specific message.

Take charge of your channels

The demand from various LSC departments requesting messages be posted can be overwhelming. Everyone’s messaging is important, but is it social media worthy? Offer alternative solutions like offering to add the message to DMS, bulletin boards, etc. Keeping in mind that not all channels may be the right one, split up the requests to keep the total number of posts on a particular channel to a minimum.

How much is too much

Studies show that posting once per day is optimal, with a maximum of two per day. At a minimum requirement of 3 posts per week. Following this best practices will help force you determine which messaging are truly important. Over posting can cause you content to be wall paper to your audience and not stand out.

Consider Your Reach

Consistently posting authentic and compelling content, while strategically engaging with followers and fans, can, on average, expect a result of 1,000 followers within 7 months to a year.

Official campus social media channels have had over 10 years of experience and a team dedicated to developing and maintaining the following. Posting on official campus channels yield higher reach and impressions.

When to post

Posts should be timed to maximize impressions. Different social media channels may have different “best times”. Keep track of your engagement and experiment with which post times work best. Remember, it’s not always about engagement, you want to generate the largest number of impressions possible.

- Review messages that have been scheduled to post into the future on a daily basis.
- Has something changed to make the message out of date, or is being sent during weather emergency making it ill-timed?
Best Design Practices

Much like having a styleguide for graphic design marketing, social media also requires some very thought-out best practices. Following these guidelines will help to ensure your messaging has the “One Voice” while also maintain a pleasant and compelling look to attract the attention of your audience.

Some basic practices to keep in mind...
- Minimal text on graphic (3 - 4 words).
- Logo should not go on image. It’s redundant and takes up space.
- URL’s should go in the caption and not on the image.
- Text should not echo the copy with photo/graphic.
- Photo/graphic should focus on an organic look, not like an ad.

Hashtags

Hashtags play a crucial role in developing interest in your social media accounts and are used on a number of social platforms. Using hashtags can amplify your post to a larger audience, connect with others and build community.

It’s important to use hash tags, but they must be used properly.
- Not all hashtags may be appropriate for all social media channels.
- Don’t over use hashtags. Use only relevant ones and keep them to a minimum.
- Research what hashtags are trending and keep a list handy.
- Don’t make up a hashtag that no else is using, or worse, one that is actually harmful to your message.

Tagging

Tagging an organization or person in your post can be a great way to ensure they see your message and creates the possibility of them sharing your post to gain access to a larger audience.

Keep in mind...
- You want to make sure the person/organization you are tagging is someone you want to be associated with. Just because they wrote/posted something nice about you does not mean you should tag them, or share their post.
- There are a lot of fake/similar looking accounts. Take the time to ensure you are using the right social media handle when tagging someone.
- Twitter allows you tag up to 10 people in a posted photo which can cut down the copy of the tweet.

Compelling CTAs

All links should include a persuasive CTA (call to action). Let your audience know what’s in it for them. What is the benefit for someone (save money, time, special offer)? If you can’t answer that question, you should probably not post.

Examples of effective CTAs include...
- Start with an action word (See how LSC can get you trained and get you hired).
- Create a sense of urgency (Don’t miss out on getting the class you need).
- Suggest that the offer is exclusive (Classes are filling fast, don’t miss out!).
- Raise interest (You got questions? We’ve got answers!)

Consult the LSC Brand & Logo, and Editorial Styleguides to create approved content.

Styleguides can be found at LoneStar.edu/Marketing-Resources
Position Yourself as a Thought Leader

Social media is a great tool to be relevant to your audience. Online stories that feature higher education topics can turn your college into a thought leader and elevate your social media profile as an authority in higher education. Not every post has to be about your school to be shared on your social media channels.

- Be educational
- Drive action
- Leverage data
- Say something new
- Provoke discussion

Be Social

This may sound unnecessary, but social media is about being social. When you are doing all the talking and not listening defeats the purpose of engaging with our audience.

- Like positive responses to your post. It’s also nice to reply saying thanks.
- Look for posts that tag you and like/reshare when appropriate.
- Build a network of like-minded social media sellers to download and engage with them when the opportunity presents itself.

Social Media Monitoring vs. Social Media Listening

Both of these components are important in developing successful social media strategies.

Social Media Monitoring
- Looks back
- Collects information
- Focuses on details
- Measures success

Social Media Listening
- Looks forward
- Studies information
- Focuses on the “Big Picture”
- Guides as strategy

Reacting to Positive & Negative Feedback

Tips for responding to positive feedback:

- Say Thanks: Tell someone thanks for positive remarks by either liking their comment, giving a thumbs up, or simply saying “Thanks!”.
- Tag Them: Be sure to tag the person/organization when thanking them by name. This adds a personal touch that will be appreciated.
- Sharing is Caring: Do you have a social media super fan? See what they are posting and share (when appropriate) with your audience.

Tips for responding to negative feedback:

- Don’t Hesitate: It is better to provide a response sooner than later. A simple quick acknowledgement that you are looking into something will go a long way to defuse a situation.
- Don’t Delete: This can be seen trying to hide from criticism. Deleting a negative comment could actually make the issue grow bigger.
- Don’t Get Cornered: It might be best to send an upset person an email address or phone number and urge them to contact you directly and take the conversation offline.
For more information visit:

LoneStar.edu/Marketing-Communications