

Case Study Title: Social Media - City of Eau Claire

Case Study Category: Community Building

Jurisdiction Name: City of Eau Claire, Eau Claire, Wisconsin

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Synopsis

City of Eau Claire Social Media

In November of 2010, the City of Eau Claire officially joined the world of Social Media. With Social Media, we offer connections to Facebook, Blogger, YouTube, and Twitter. Each outlet gives residence a slightly different way to stay informed about City services and events, and to join with us in building a stronger and more vibrant community.

Facebook:

This popular social networking site helps you see what's happening in the City of Eau Claire while staying in touch with friends/colleagues, and making new contacts and exploring communities of shared interests. The City's Facebook page acts as a platform for community communications and hosts news updates, project stories, links to articles, pictures and status updates on emergency situations, such as flooding and snow removal efforts.

When the City was hit with a severe thunderstorm on May 24th of this year, the City's Facebook page served as a message board for citizens to inform us of downed power lines and trees blocking the road. Through our Facebook page, we asked citizens to post any emergency situations needing attention. Immediately, we received many posts letting us know the areas of the city that needed help. The News Media follows our Facebook page very closely. When they posted questions to us during the storm, they received immediate answers. During this emergency, residents and News Media were notified instantly of changing updates, rather than taking time away from the emergency situation to send out a "news release".

We also used the Facebook page to organize a "flash mob" to invite citizens to join us in cleaning up the storm damage in the cemetery in time for Memorial Day. Over 200 people showed up with rakes and buckets, ready to go to work!

Facebook allows citizens to be a part of the community. During emergency situations, they feel that they have a part in the recovery and clean-up efforts.

The City also has Facebook pages for various departments: Transit; Parks, Recreation & Forestry; Fairfax Swimming Pool; and Hobbs Ice Center. These Facebook platforms are a great way to get the word out when there is a detour to a bus route due to street construction, or a day when the swimming pool may be closed due to inclement weather, as well as an invitation to bring a canned food item to donate to "Feed My People" and receive admission to the swimming pool or ice arena at a discounted price.

Twitter:

The City's Twitter page is designed specifically to inform and interact with Eau Claire residents with short "tweets" and informative messages on various events, programs and services going on in the City of Eau Claire that the media and residents may find newsworthy. The convenience of Twitter also offers a mobile phone feature to receive messages on the go, which many journalists and our residents find

useful. The Fire Rescue Department has engaged in a Twitter page to let citizens know whether or not conditions are safe for them to burn leaves, etc. The Police Department, Transit and Public Works also have Twitter pages.

YouTube:

The City's YouTube site shows interesting and informative videos about City operations and newscasts regarding various issues. If you missed it on the news, you can find it here!

Blogger:

The Police Department has a Communications Blog informing City residents of timely news updates. For example, in October a blog is posted to remind citizens that the calendar day parking regulations will be in effect throughout the winter months. Another blog reminds citizens to lock their vehicles. Yet another blog directs citizens to a site with information regarding Wisconsin's new Carrying Concealed Weapons Law. These blogs automatically are posted to the City's Facebook page, too.

Social Media/City of Eau Claire Background:

Once the City decided to go forward with incorporating Social Media, we enlisted the help of a private consultant, Laurie Boettcher of "Laurie Boettcher Speaks!" to help devise a plan to integrate Social Media into the City's everyday operations. Laurie Boettcher is a speaker, trainer and Social Media enthusiast and can be reached at www.lbspeaksonline.com. A core group of administrators made up of the Information Services Manager, IS technician, Assistant City Manager and Media/Communications Specialist, met with Laurie to formulate a Social Media Policy and working plan to meet with interested departments.

The first step for a department interested in Social Media is to fill out a questionnaire. The questionnaire helps to guide the department as far as which Social Media tool they would want to initiate in their department. The following questions are included-

- Why do you want to get involved in Social Media?
- What do you want to achieve?
- What City approved Social Media tool would you like to use?
- How do you define success? 30 days? 90? 180? 365?
- What will make it worth your while to continue to use Social Media?
- Who is your target audience or market?
- How will you promote Social Media?
- How often will you interact and monitor?
- What will be the personality of the Social Media presence?

The department representatives bring the filled-out questionnaire to a meeting with the Core Group to discuss their plans and the possibilities of Social Media. During the meeting, the participants go over the questionnaire and the different Social Media options. Once they come to a consensus on getting involved with Social Media and which Social Media platform would work best for their goals, they

review the Social Media Policy. Each administrator must sign the policy, which states that they agree to follow the guidelines as set forth in the policy. The IS Technician then sets up their Social Media account and gives them access to their page, whether it be Facebook, Twitter, or Blogger, and they are ready to go!

Cost; Cost Savings:

There is a cost associated with hiring a private consultant, depending on the agreement. There is also a cost for staff time for training and administering the Social Media sites. However, there is also a cost savings, when looking at the quicker response to citizens' requests, as well as relaying information to the public.

Performance Measures:

Each Facebook page has an "Insight" section, which gives an overview of each post. This shows how many people "liked" or "shared" a post, as well as the comments on each post. This section tabulates how many people were actually "reached" by measuring how many friends each person who liked or shared a post has on their own Facebook page, and whether these friends shared the post with *their* friends.

Obstacle:

- **Adherence to the Wisconsin Public Records Law with regard to Facebook posts.** In order to comply with this Law, administrators must save the Facebook posts, as well as any comments, to a "pdf" file. If someone were to request a record of a particular post, the post would be readily available. (This is not a concern with Twitter, since all tweets can be recovered.)

Presentation Style:

PowerPoint; Link to City Website/Social Media Page