

City of Evanston, IL Social Media Guidelines

PURPOSE

To utilize our social media outlets to connect with residents/participants; market our programs/events; collaborate with other local and national recreation, arts, and ecology providers; and expand on our department mission in order to increase accessibility and participation in all of our programs and events. For purposes of these guidelines, social media is a type of interactive online media that allows parties to communicate instantly with each other or to share data in a public forum. This includes, but not limited to, online social forums, blogs, video-and image sharing websites and similar facilities.

FOLLOW THE 70/20/10 RULE

70 % should add Value and Build Brand – These can be our own content, photos of our own participants, classes, etc., with a descriptive sentence and caption. Make these fun and creative! Ask questions, create surveys or polls, either or questions. Use a variety of content—like tips and tricks, articles, motivational images/quotes, etc.

20% should be interactive—sharing others' posts and links, sharing news from other non-profits (Tag community partners, promoting other community events of interest, etc.)

10% should be promotional or sales

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND AUTHOR RESPONSIBILITIES

All employees, volunteers, or agents of the City of Evanston must be aware at all times that, while contributing to the City's social media activities; they are representing the City of Evanston. Staff members who use social media as part of their job must adhere to the following safeguards and author responsibilities:

1. Moderate all content and activity across all social media activity on a daily basis.
2. Respect the privacy of our residents, staff and community.
3. Post meaningful, respectful comments—in other words, no spam (any messages that are disruptive to the user), no remarks that are off-topic.
4. Must not do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, for example by:
 - Making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender reassignment, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief or age; or
 - Using social media to bully another individual (such as an employee of the City); or
 - posting images that are discriminatory or offensive links to such content or;
 - bring the City into disrepute by criticizing or arguing with citizens, colleagues, or other users.
5. Pause and think before posting, but reply to comments in a timely manner when a response is appropriate.
6. When disagreeing with others' opinions, keep it appropriate and polite.

7. Be transparent. Do not post derogatory or defamatory comments of the staff, customers or volunteers. Anyone can see posts on the web.
8. Respect copyright and fair use laws (including posting of copyrighted materials, videos, photos, and music).
9. Verify accuracy of information before posting. If inaccurate information gets posted, acknowledge and correct quickly.
10. Credit the accurate third-party accounts of media, figures, and organizations when posting or sharing a link.

HOW OFTEN?

At a minimum aim for once a day, but twice a day is even better. When possible, leave about 2-3 hours between posts to allow each post some time to reach the audience. Newsfeeds are changing all the time, and now more than ever, it's harder than ever to reach our residents through our sites. The more they interact with us, the more likely we are to show up in their newsfeed, which means they won't have to actively come to our sites for every update we're making. We can post content to Twitter on a continual basis, while we should reserve our most important stories for Facebook.

CONTENT AND DECISION PROCESS

We really hope our tweets, posts, updates, blogs, pages and sites will become forums for lively conversation. Differences of opinion are healthy, and we welcome open conversations. However, to preserve the integrity of posts and the conversations that happen here, we will not publish any comments that:

1. Include lewd, offensive, prejudiced, or inappropriate language;
2. Wander off topic, or are irrelevant to the subject matter of the post to which they are attached;
3. Contain references / photos of alcohol or illicit substances; or
4. Disclose of confidential information related to past, present or future employees, volunteers, members, participants, guests, donors, or other persons conducting business with the City of Evanston.

PHOTOGRAPHS/VIDEOS

If you are going to include pictures or videos of youth in your posts, here are some guidelines we should be following:

1. We should only be using pictures/videos of groups of youth.
2. The picture/video should not be a close up and should not identify anyone by name, unless permission is granted from parent/guardian.
3. The exact location of the picture/video should not be identified.

4. If possible, minimize the appearance of the faces of the youth in the picture/video, unless permission is granted from parent/guardian.

INTERACTING WITH FANS/FOLLOWERS

As an author, you should actively participate and maintain the content, conversation and communities that are part of the social media sites in which you participate. It should be clear you represent the City of Evanston. Stick to your area of expertise and provide unique, individual perspectives on what's going on in the City of Evanston and in the world.

If you're not sure how to respond, start with identifying the type of interaction.

If it's *positive interaction*—someone praising a staff member or loving a program—acknowledge it and encourage more interaction. “Like” or “Retweet” the comment /post, say how glad you are to hear they like and follow up with a question—what do you like about it?

A *Neutral interaction* isn't emotionally charged. It could be a resident asking about information on a program – you can respond quickly with their information.

It's often our first reaction when we get negative feedback—we want to remove it immediately, delete the comment or block the user. However, feedback, especially negative feedback, gives us an opportunity to use this interaction to our own advantage. I try to break a negative comment/post into one of four categories:

Straight Problems: This is when someone has an issue with our services or facilities, and lays out exactly what went wrong. These usually expose some problem or issue we may or may not be aware of—it could be something like a resident expressing anger that our program is cancelled again, or that they missed out on a registration date, etc. We need to handle these like we would any customer service issue in person or on the phone- acknowledge their comment promptly, apologize for any inconveniences they may be experiencing (specifically if possible!) and explain what happened, publicly. Then move the conversation offline, if necessary.

Constructive Criticism: This is a straight problem, but with a suggestion attached. Maybe they have a fantastic idea, maybe it's something we know we can't implement – either way, we need to acknowledge it, respond publicly and thank them for their suggestion.

Merited Attack: These can be the most difficult. These comments are often rooted in a real issue, which makes it tricky to respond to, but we still need to. If we messed up on something and they had a terrible experience and want to rant about it on our Facebook/Twitter- so long as it's true and there's a merited reason for their anger – we need to allow it. That's the beauty and the curse of social media—it's a conversation, but at least by stating their problem publicly, they're allowing us to be a part of the solution. We can respond promptly, acknowledge their issue, apologize for what we can, and explain what happened. Offer to call them at their earliest convenience, tell them that their business and loyalty matter to us and we take their issues seriously. These are the most important comments to respond to, because if we delete them, we look like we don't care about our residents, we don't know how to handle criticism, and we come off disingenuous.

Trolling/Spam – these are the haters on the internet. We will get them from time – either it's someone spamming us with their own promotion, or it's someone bashing the city for reasons that aren't founded in reality or truths. These we should ignore.