Social Media Guide

This guide is intended to help you utilize your social media channels to best engage your audiences. Social media can be a powerful tool to help support recruitment of prospective students; engage and answer questions of current students, faculty, and staff; as well as inform and keep in touch with parents, alumni, and donors. By following these best practice tips in your social media use, you can gain credibility and value to both your department and the institution.

General Best Practices

- Social media accounts should be logged into a minimum of once per day to monitor and respond to posts, comments, mentions, etc.

- If you are present and responsive, you will gain credibility and value. Establishing and then deserting or not regularly checking or posting to a social media channel will reflect poorly on your department and the college.

- Follow the main Castleton Facebook page (facebook.com/CastletonEdu), Castleton Twitter (@CastletonEdu), and Instagram (@CastletonEdu), as well as the other official Castleton accounts from your Castleton account. Lists will be available off the Social Media Hub web page later this fall.

Facebook

- Be a “Page,” not a “Profile”: Profiles are designed for individuals only and users may view inappropriate profiles as misleading. It also violates Facebook’s Terms of Service, and you risk “permanently losing accessing to the account and all of it’s content.”

- People expect less frequent posts from Facebook – posting 3-5 times a week is reasonable.

- The most appealing updates are ones that offer something, but don’t disclose everything – make them want to click through to the story, website, or information you are sharing.

- Posts with images get the highest amount of engagement on Facebook, so make sure to include one when you can. Optimal size is 800x600px (roughly 11 in x 8 in).

- Engage with people as they comment and respond. People may sometimes call out a mistake or post negatively. Correcting a mistake, apologizing and offering better in the future, or providing the information that is in question, is the best way to let the poster know you have heard them. Unless the post is profane, obscene, harassing, or threatening, it is not best practice to delete it.

- After adding a link to your status update, you can delete it so the URL does not appear in the update, but allowing your audience to still click through.

- Post not only when your audience is listening, but when you are available to respond to questions and comments.
**Instagram**

- Instagram is a visual-based, social platform that allows institutions to:
  - Showcase program and department highlights in a creative way
  - Establish visual brand identity
  - Create interactive #hashtag campaigns

- Make sure that your photos are high resolution - they'll be more engaging and present a clear message.

- Use unique hashtags but keep them simple and relevant to Castleton and your area. Don't overload your post with hashtags, either. #tagsforlikes is inappropriate.

- The most appealing photos have the subject of the photo in only two-thirds of the picture. This means that you should not be taking pictures from a distance, but rather closeups of materials or pics that faces and action can be seen. This is the most engaging.

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**Twitter**

- Log in at least once a day to post often and respond with some immediacy.

- Give a clear call to action so your readers know what you want them to do.

- Users are used to frequent updates. Even if you don't have enough content to post multiple times each day, you should log in and check mentions and direct messages a couple times a day.

- Avoid all caps. Plan out what you would like to say to trim down to 140 characters. Remember, links and images use some of that space, as well.

- Bit.ly links generate the most retweets, so shorten your URLs – you can track how many clicks you get this way, too. (Bit.ly is a link shortener that recreates re-directs to longer links.)

- Use questions, facts, and figures to engage viewers and drive retweets.

- Use mentions to prompt influencers to engage with you and then respond.

- Retweet relevant content for your audience, not just self-promotion. Try to space out your retweets – either manually or with a service like Hootsuite or Buffer.

- Don’t only monitor those tweets that mention your handle directly, but set up a search so you can keep an ear on what is happening when people do not tag you in their tweet. When it’s appropriate, respond or retweet. (Using a service like Hootsuite or TweetDeck will allow you to monitor multiple searches at once. And there are free versions of each!)

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Sources:
http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/227590
And used with permission from Tufts University: http://webcomm.tufts.edu/social-media-overview13/

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89% of internet users aged 18-29 use social media

67% of internet users aged 18-29 access social media on a mobile phone

IN 2020 today’s digital natives will continue to utilize social networking