



CS360 SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDEBOOK

*HOW TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO ADVANCE COMMUNITY
TRANSPARENCY, ENGAGEMENT, AND THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF CS360.*

AS PUBLIC DEMANDS FOR TRANSPARENCY GROW,

police are adapting by implementing new tools and practices, such as CS360. CS360 enhances upon the traditional CompStat model by allowing police departments to take a proactive problem-solving approach and engage community partners as equal partners in the public safety landscape. A central component of CS360 is the integration of the community as collaborators and co-producers of public safety as partners with law enforcement. Social media is an important tool for law enforcement to engage widely with their community as a means to involve them

in CS360, share successes, promote transparency, advance a more inclusive community engagement strategy, and ultimately build community trust.

Implementing new policies and strategic approaches to community engagement is only half the battle. Equally important is knowing how to share information about these policies with the general public, specifically on social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, whose impact on law enforcement has been overwhelming.

While police departments have utilized social media over recent years to tell their stories, many are still struggling with



learning on how to do it effectively. Fortunately, there is no need to invest large portions of the budget on social media. Some departments have a team or an individual who is already social media-savvy and can take over this task easily. Alternatively, this can seem like a daunting task to a department that does not already have a social media presence. However, it is important to remember that all that is needed for a successful media strategy is a willingness to engage authentically, a commitment to sharing information, and knowledge of the most effective ways to do so. Whether they are starting from scratch or wanting to improve their current presence, departments should consider the following questions when thinking about how to use social media effectively:

***WHICH SOCIAL MEDIA
PLATFORMS SHOULD I
BE USING?***

***WHO SHOULD
MANAGE THE
ACCOUNTS?***

***WHO IS MY
AUDIENCE?***

***WHAT ARE MY KEY
MESSAGES?***

***HOW CAN I ENLIST
SUPPORT FROM
OFFICERS?***

***HOW CAN I MEASURE
SUCCESS?***

WHICH SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS SHOULD I BE USING?

Social media can be overwhelming, especially when it seems like a new platform is emerging every day. Despite the multitude of platforms available, departments should not strive to be everywhere and are much better off investing in a channel or channels that they can maintain without spreading themselves too thin. Most importantly, they should strive to be where the majority of their community is active. As of 2020, the top three platforms for law enforcement in the United States were:

TWITTER

A relatively small network (“only” 330 million users), Twitter is commonly used by journalists and politicians, and therefore is very influential. With a 280-character limit, Twitter is the best platform for breaking news and sharing short, timely messages. If a police-involved shooting or a negative national incident occurred, Twitter will likely play a significant role, so it is vital that departments are comfortable with the platform.

GOOD TO KNOW:

- 01** *There are 250,000 tweets sent out every minute.*
- 02** *A user can post up to 4 photos or one video with each tweet.*
- 03** *All tweets are public and can be seen by anyone unless otherwise specified.*
- 04** *A Twitter user cannot edit tweets after they are sent.*
- 05** *Tweets can go viral quickly, for better or worse, so the platform should be monitored regularly.*

FACEBOOK

The largest of all social media platforms, with about 2.7 billion active users worldwide. Facebook tends to be more representative of the general US population than Twitter, with people of all age groups and many backgrounds represented on the platform. Departments can create “pages” or “groups” to share information with the public while also posting multiple photos and videos as well as writing lengthier posts.

GOOD TO KNOW:

- 01** *For the most part, Facebook insists users use their real names, so there is (slightly) more accountability.*
- 02** *Facebook allows for targeted local advertising based on zip codes for as little as \$20.*
- 03** *Facebook is becoming increasingly less popular with younger crowds.*
- 04** *Facebook allows the creation of “event” pages where people can RSVP and invite others to events, which can be useful for departments hosting community engagement events.*

INSTAGRAM

A visual platform for users to share videos and photos, with one billion active users who spend an average of an hour on the app. The “stories” feature has become increasingly popular within Instagram and is depicted as a “slideshow” that disappears after 24 hours. Instagram stories are especially popular with people under 34 that make up more than 75% of the audience. Instagram is a lot less “engagement” friendly; there is less sharing of content (unless a user is tagged), and while users can comment on posts, there is usually less back-and-forth on the Instagram compared to other social media platforms. Additionally, public commenting is not available on Instagram stories.

GOOD TO KNOW:

- 01** *Facebook owns Instagram.*
- 02** *Hashtags can help increase engagement on Instagram more so than other platforms.*
- 03** *Stories features are increasingly popular and have more than 500 million daily users.*
- 04** *Users cannot post links on Instagram (aside from within the bio section).*

WHO SHOULD MANAGE THE ACCOUNTS?

Many departments have a full-time PIO or even a team, but it is possible to utilize existing sworn or non-sworn staff. The person in charge of the social media accounts (can also be known as the Digital Communication Officer) should be responsible, comfortable with writing, and comfortable with

using social media technology. It is essential that the person be trained by a professional either within the department or externally and know the department rules and regulations well. If possible, he or she should be able to dedicate a reasonable amount of time to the accounts. The Digital Communications Officer does not necessarily need to be the person who uses social media extensively in their personal life, but rather someone that can represent the department well and cautiously while also being fluent in the online language and culture.

Social media communications should be strategic and planned out when possible. Posts do not need to be written far in advance, but they should follow a general messaging plan and theme. Therefore, departments should strive to identify their core messages and make sure that all posts serve those messages. While the core messages can change, it is useful to identify them in advance to stay on track and convey the right image for the

organization. When coming up with the core messages, start with the department's priorities. Example core messages can include enhancing public safety, enhancing traffic safety, building trust, and/or improving recruitment.

WHAT ARE MY KEY MESSAGES?



WHO IS MY AUDIENCE?

It is essential to identify who the department wants to reach and tailor all posts accordingly. Overall, the community is likely to be the core audience—this is an important part of building community trust through transparent

communication. Messages can be focused on specific sub-communities, age groups, and interest groups, and should consider other audiences such as officers and other city agencies. Each platform can also help address different audiences and their preference for consuming information. Agencies should use all of the top three social media platforms listed above, but tailor the message according to platform. An Instagram post looks different than a Facebook post, which looks even more different from a short Twitter post.

TWITTER



NYPD NEWS
@NYPDnews

Officer Gregory Foster died a hero while serving this great city in 1972.

On Friday, with tears in his eyes, his son, Gregory Foster II, was proud to pin his father's shield on his own son, Gregory Foster III. Foster III will serve in the same precinct where his grandpa served



FACEBOOK



NYPD
November 18, 2019 ·

Officer Gregory Foster was assassinated with his partner Rocco Laurie when they were patrolling the streets of the East Village in 1972. The two partners had served in the Marines together, were both Vietnam War veterans, and requested to work together in the [NYPD 9th Precinct](#).

This past Friday, almost 50 years later, Foster's son, Gregory Foster II, had tears in his eyes as he passed along his father's shield and legacy to his son, Gregory Foster III.

Foster III will serve in the same precinct where his grandfather and partner served, proudly wearing his grandfather's shield and carrying on the Foster legacy of service and heroism.



INSTAGRAM



nypd



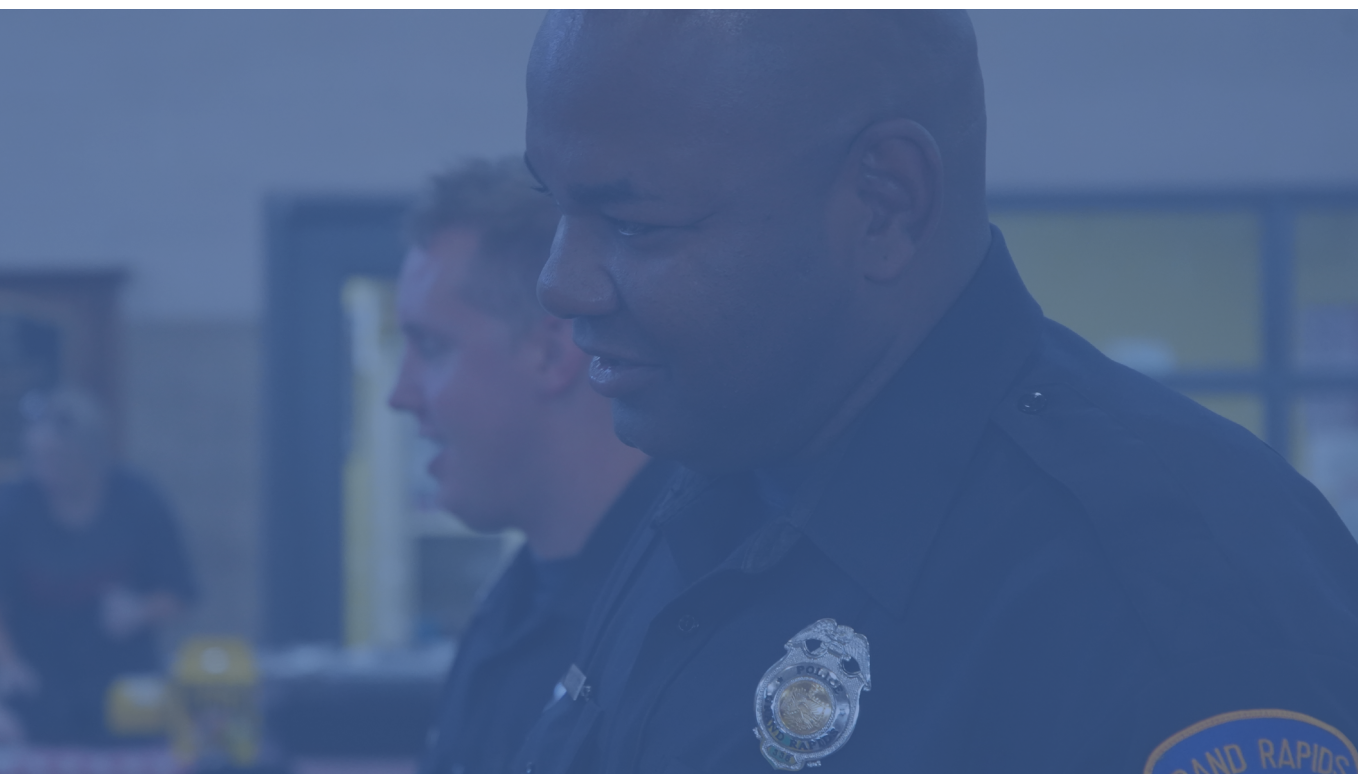
Liked by [estevan_norales](#) and 29,904 others

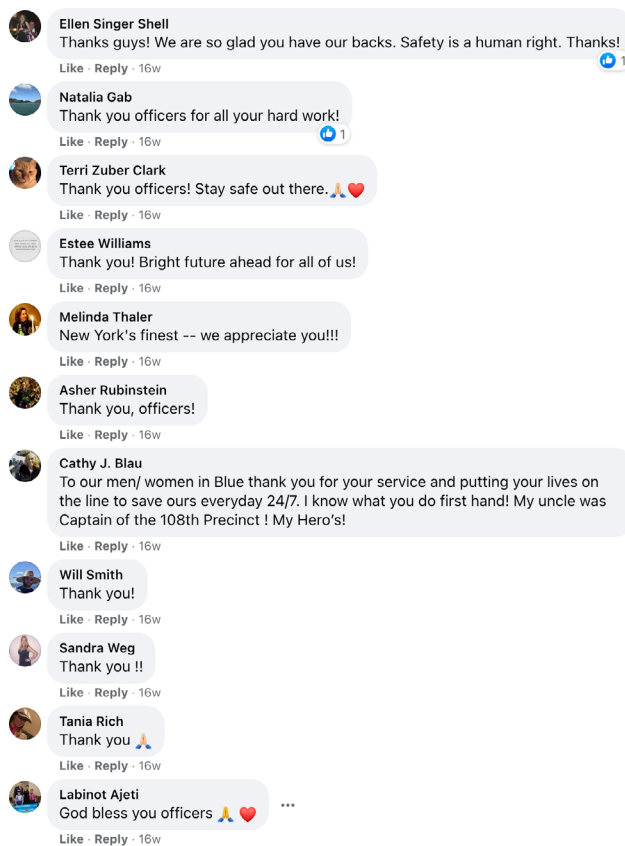
nypd Officer Gregory Foster was assassinated with his partner Rocco Laurie while they were patrolling the streets of the East Village in 1972. The two partners had served in the Marines together, were both Vietnam War veterans, and requested to work together in the 9th precinct. This past Friday, almost 50 years later, Foster's son, Gregory Foster II, had tears in his eyes as he passed along his father's shield and legacy to his son, Gregory Foster III.

Success for law enforcement on social media is not necessarily measured by likes or reach. Instead, police departments should focus on a combination of qualitative and quantitative measures to assess their program's success. Departments should solicit feedback from community members and officers on the account and periodically evaluate what types of content they want to see. Additionally, departments should strive to identify their key messages in advance, as mentioned above, and activities they would like to promote, and periodically assess how they

are received. While departments are encouraged to measure growth and identify their top-performing posts, the metrics should not always be a sign of success. In other words, aim for quality over quantity and spread the right message at the right time as opposed to ranking high in the likes and views.

HOW CAN I MEASURE SUCCESS?





HOW CAN I ENLIST SUPPORT FROM OFFICERS?

Social media is a shared effort because it requires collecting content and information from various sources. The PIO or Digital Communications Officer is like an editor of a magazine, and officers are field reporters submitting “stories.” Therefore, it is essential to get their support and have them on board with the endeavor. The department can utilize social media to recognize officers for their

outstanding work on an arrest or outreach to the community. This serves two purposes— it allows the department to recognize and acknowledge officers for their hard work and makes the public aware of the department’s great police. Equally as important is sharing positive feedback when it originates from social media posts. If social media posts have many positive comments or even turns into a local news story, it is crucial to spread this good news around to the command. Officers are not immune to the negativity of social media conversation around law enforcement, and it is useful to take every opportunity to remind them when they are getting positive attention.

CONTENT BEST PRACTICES

Most importantly, police must understand that they are dealing with a public scrolling through social media updates on a small screen, often consuming hundreds, if not thousands, of updates a day. Therefore, social media platforms need to be optimized to catch their attention and convey the message in an optimized way.

BEST PRACTICES FOR POLICE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA INCLUDE:

USE EVERYDAY LANGUAGE

One thing most effective social media accounts have in common is that they use an authentic and personal tone. Often, police resort to overly formal communications that make their social media posts challenging to understand. In addition to being hard to understand, formal language makes communications appear robotic and inauthentic. Therefore, accounts should strive to use a common language, avoid police jargon, and treat social media posts, not as press releases or police reports. Communications should remain professional, of course, but the use of language can and should fit the medium.

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🎬 *USE OF IMAGES/VIDEO*

Social media platforms are usually very visual, with video and image posts enjoying far greater reach than text posts. Departments should strive to use video and images often, focusing on media that can be viewed easily on a small screen such as a mobile phone. There is no need to invest in expensive video equipment; most standard

smartphones today have built-in capabilities like cameras for capturing great moments and some basic editing tools that can help add text or crop video and images. As for uploading image content, try to capture photos from day-to-day police work, and opt for “action shots” of people interacting and working instead of large group shots or staged photos.



Happy Thanksgiving from all of us at the Boulder Police Department! Be safe [#Boulder](#)



Chief John Drake joined the five officers in an emotional group hug after this morning's news conference.



♥ HUMANIZING OFFICERS

Even though there are more than 18,000 police departments in the country, officers today are often seen by the public as one nameless, faceless organization. It is important to remind them that police officers come from diverse backgrounds and are human beings who choose to wear their uniforms every day. Seek to use social media to share officer's stories and introduce them to the public. The goal is to raise awareness that the men and women behind the badge are no different from themselves, all sharing the common goal of keeping the community safe. Some ideas for posts humanizing officers:

- 01** *Spotlight on an individual officer and why they decided to join the department.*
- 02** *Stories of officers that speak different languages and come from diverse backgrounds.*
- 03** *Stories of an officer with multiple law enforcement or public servants in their family.*
- 04** *Sharing the story of an interesting job an officer held before they joined.*
- 05** *Stories of unique connections officers made with members of the community.*
- 06** *Stories of officers with strong ties to the community they serve.*

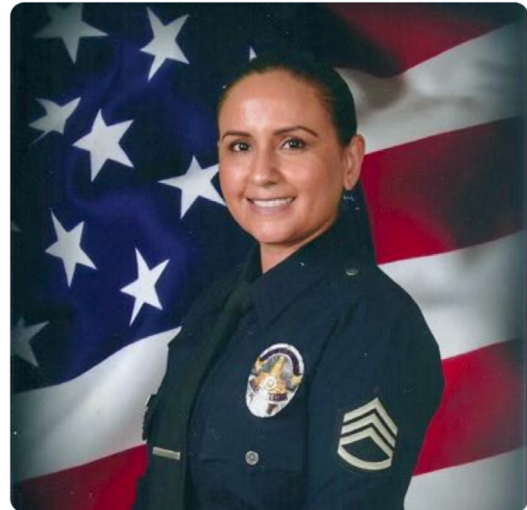
Human interest stories do not need to be breaking news or heroic acts. A simple story that gives insight into the life of an officer is interesting and heartwarming enough.



- Raised in LA, 1 of 12 children
- Sold tamales on the streets
- Pregnant at 15 & homeless at 17

Meet LAPD Sergeant Ruiz

- Bachelor's / Master's degrees with honors
- Adjunct college professor
- Active mentor for young women



Hull Street-1985

There are a lot of stories in the picture on the left.

The little boy in the red with the big head grew up to be the Commanding Officer of the community he was born in.

My name is Terrell Anderson and I'm honored to be back home in [#Brownsville](#) to serve.





ENGAGING THE AUDIENCE

Social media should be used as a two-way form of communication when possible. It is not being used to its fullest extent if it is only used as a platform for police to

disseminate information without responding to comments, questions, and concerns. While not every comment merits a response, police departments should strive to engage with citizens when using these platforms by answering relevant questions and addressing comments when appropriate.

JOINING COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

Engaging does not just mean responding; it also means monitoring social media to see areas of community concern or dissatisfaction. Police departments should follow publicly available feeds of local newspapers, community advocacy groups, and others. This will give insight into areas of community discussion as they pertain to policing. For example, community groups may be discussing a rise in crime in a particular

neighborhood that the police department may be able to address directly.

Additionally, monitoring for community feedback can give great insight into what residents prioritize which may be different from what we are prioritizing. It is important to note that social media chatter does not necessarily reflect all residents' views and sometimes can be led by a small but vocal group. Police should be aware of these conversations and decide on a course of action based on knowledge of their communities.



COMMIT TO TRANSPARENCY

A strong social media presence creates trust between police and communities, and this trust will be broken if police are not forthcoming with information. If social media feeds only address the positive and grow silent during tragedies or areas of disagreement, the message becomes insincere. Therefore, and especially given the current climate of fragile community relations, police should strive to be as transparent as possible with information, even if the information reflects growth areas. While uncomfortable at times, it is almost a guarantee that negative information will come to light with or without an official department statement, so the best practice is to be forthcoming.

OFFLINE OUTREACH TO THE COMMUNITY

A successful social media presence does not happen overnight and requires a lot of “offline” work. Officers should spread the word about the department’s social media presence with partners, businesses, and community members that may not be aware of it. This should include adding social media accounts to email signatures, newsletters, and mentioning it in forums to garner attention. The goal is not to have the largest number of followers, but rather the right followers – community members invested in public safety.

BUILDING A NETWORK

Social media not only helps departments connect with their local community, but it can also help connect with their larger region as well. Departments can use social media to share initiatives, programs, and resources with other departments and communities in the region, or even the entire state, and can use it to extend their reach beyond the borders of their local jurisdiction.