THE GOVERNMENT’S GUIDE TO USING FACEBOOK
Providing a platform that enables direct interactions between governments and their citizens is an important part of our mission to make the world more open and connected. With more than 188 million people on Facebook in the United States, Facebook is an efficient and effective place for governments to engage with their constituents. That's why we've created a variety of tools that make communicating easy for local, state, and federal government.

In partnership with GovLoop, we hope this guide helps you develop a winning strategy for communicating on Facebook. Whether you are providing information, answering questions, or asking for feedback, we'll help you find what works best for you.

Success on Facebook means posting content that is interesting, useful, and engaging — and doing it on a regular basis. We see the best response to posts that include videos, behind-the-scenes photos, and posts in which a government agency initiates a two-way conversation with citizens.

For governments, Facebook can also be an effective channel to share preparedness tips and keep citizens informed with real-time, location-specific information in case of an emergency.

Facebook’s self-serve advertising tool also allows governments to promote content to people beyond their existing follower base and to those in specific geographic areas. This can be a cost-effective way to reach more constituents with content that is relevant to them. This guide includes tips on advertising.

How people consume information is constantly evolving, and for governments to be successful, they will need to continuously engage with their followers to understand what types of content resonate the most.

We hope this guide serves as a helpful resource for you and your Page administrator as you build and expand your Facebook presence. We look forward to seeing some innovative ideas from governments. Good luck!
The Government’s Guide to Facebook

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Think back to the state of social media before 2010. In those days, simply having a Facebook Page and posting to it occasionally was enough for many organizations and the public sector. In fact, in many cases it meant that you were at the cutting edge of public-sector social media.

But today, just having a social media presence is no longer enough. You must be smart, strategic and ever more creative in order to gain the attention of your audience and reach the right people in your community.

And that’s what we’re here to help you do. GovLoop and Facebook have partnered to create this resource, The Government’s Guide to Facebook, to help you use Facebook to better reach your constituents in exciting, innovative and effective ways.

In the following pages, we’ll explain and detail myriad Facebook services that align with public-sector users’ needs and goals. We’ll also give you several best practices on how to create great content, use paid advertising and ensure your Page stays secure.

We’ll then hear from those on the ground in the public sector who are using Facebook with interesting and successful applications. We’ve interviewed several citizen engagement experts — including folks at the Department of Veterans Affairs and Henrico County in Virginia — and we’ll offer up six case studies of excellent and creative Facebook uses that will inspire you.

Finally, we surveyed the GovLoop audience to find out the most common questions and concerns they had about using Facebook. We’ve turned these questions — and answers from the team at Facebook — into a handy FAQ for you to reference.

Today, to reach your citizens, you need to be tactical and strategic. Applying the advice in this guide to your use of Facebook will help guarantee you’re reaching your audience there and encouraging them to take action on community issues.

To get a sense of the current Facebook government landscape, GovLoop surveyed 451 members of our audience — comprised of government employees, industry leaders and public-sector workers. Here are a few of our findings:

• 87 percent of respondents said their organizations already have a Facebook Page.
• 91 percent said the No. 1 objective of using Facebook was to keep citizens informed.
• 80 percent said photos are the most popular content posted.
• 57 percent of respondents are NOT currently using advertising tools, while 23 percent are and 20 percent are unsure.
• Text updates, photos/images and links are the types of content most frequently posted.
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FACEBOOK BEST PRACTICES

Want to make your Facebook Page the best it can be — and get more engagement? Follow these tips.
We break down everything from how News Feed works to why you need to be using Facebook video for more engagement.
GOOD CONTENT CREATION

ACE YOUR PROMOTIONAL METHODS

MEASURE SUCCESS

MAKE SURE YOUR PAGE IS SECURE
TIP # 1
Good Content Creation

Good, authentic and interesting content is the heartbeat of Facebook. You can post as often as you like or boost posts constantly, but nothing will gain you more success on your Facebook Page than creating thoughtful, interesting and relevant content — whether it’s a simple, considerate text update or a beautiful image.

Remember: Most people will see your posts in the News Feed, not on your page. In your content, creativity and authenticity will be rewarded. Succinctness, timeliness and great visuals are all hallmarks of successful posts.

Here, we’ll detail best practices from Facebook on how to make sure you’re posting the best content that will get you the most engagement from your fans and constituents.

But first, we wanted to delve into information about something relevant to all of you: Facebook’s News Feed.

How does Facebook’s News Feed work?

Of all the questions we’ve received from the GovLoop audience about Facebook tips, we hear this one the most.

Naturally, everyone who manages a Page on Facebook wants every single thing they post to reach each of their fans. But the fact is, every time the average Facebook user visits their News Feed there are 1,500 potential stories for them to see from their friends or Pages they follow. Most people don’t have enough time to see them all.

That’s why News Feed ranks the stories and shows you what is important and relevant to you based on the things you’ve engaged with most on Facebook. For example, if you tend to post, comment on, and watch lots of videos then videos will show up higher in your News Feed.

“The goal of News Feed is to deliver the right content to the right people at the right time so they don’t miss the stories that are important to them,” said Katie Harbath, Global Politics and Government Outreach Manager at Facebook.

With so many stories, there is a good chance people would miss something they wanted to see if Facebook displayed a continuous, unranked stream of information.

In fact, testing has shown that when Facebook stops ranking and shows content in chronological order, there is a decrease in the number of stories people read and engage with – people actually miss more stories when everything is shown chronologically.

There aren’t enough hours in the day for people to spend the time it would take to read everything in their News Feed, and the volume will continue to grow as people add new friends and interests.

As a result, Facebook’s algorithm ranks millions of posts a day to determine which ones will be most relevant and interesting to every single reader.
So how does that algorithm work?

In short, these are the measures by which Facebook ranks posts:

- How recently has each of your fans engaged with your past posts?
- How much engagement is the post getting overall from people who have already seen it?
- How engaged has the viewer previously been with the person who is posting the content?
- Does the type of post (status update, photo, video, link) match what types have been popular with the viewer in the past?
- How recently was the post published?

So there you have it — that is how News Feed works. According to Facebook, though, nothing matters as much as creative, relevant and thoughtful content. So in the following sections, we’ll tell you how to provide just that on your Page.

PHOTOS

Photos are one of the best ways to increase engagement and likes on your Page. In fact, Facebook photos receive 50 percent more likes than non-photo posts.

Great images stop you as you scroll through your News Feed, especially when they’re authentic and accompanied by text to deliver a clear message. Additionally, people simply love great visual content. Government social media managers can increase post quality by creating quality photos.

Here are some tips on posting photos:

- Avoid images covered in text or that aren’t visually interesting.
- Bright, colorful images depicting human interaction are particularly successful.
- An example? Check out this image from the city of Manor, Texas, which shows policemen helping stranded motorists. It’s a behind-the-scenes photo that shows people getting services from the city — and it received nearly 50 likes.
- Here’s another example: Maryland’s Department of Natural Resources’ AccessDNR posted a photo of some beautiful scenery that received more than 300 likes. Consider posting natural scenes and landscapes from your state, city or county.

News Feed Visibility*

* This is a simplified equation. Facebook also looks at roughly 100,000 other high-personalized factors when determining what’s shown.
VIDEOS

Facebook now has an option to directly add videos to Facebook Pages instead of linking to them from another hosting site.

Uploading directly to Facebook is the best way to post video content because of its faster load time, auto-play in the News Feed and more detailed statistics in Facebook’s Page Insights. By adding videos directly to Facebook, you make it easy for users to find old videos from your page.

Need help? Head here for instructions on how to add video to Facebook.

Here are some ideas on posting videos:

- Keep them short. Videos of less than three minutes generally perform best.
- Make the video informative, original (uploading something you don’t own could get it deleted) and compelling.
- Don’t create a video just for the sake of creating a video. Is the information you want to share truly best conveyed in a video format or is text better?
- You don’t need to be Ken Burns to create a good Facebook video. If the video is short, interesting and educational, it doesn’t have to be produced professionally. That said, do make sure the image and audio are clear.
- Consider interviewing a government employee who has an interesting and relatable story to tell on camera.
- An example? Check out this three-minute one from Federal Student Aid. It explains what happens after you submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. It has received 16,730 views and 286 likes!
- Another example is this moving video from the Washington, D.C., Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department’s page, in which workers recall the devastating effects of a house fire. It’s gotten more than 82,500 views and 390 likes.

TEXT POSTS

Videos and photos are wonderful ways to engage your constituents, but a simple text post can still be powerful. Here are several ideas and tips for optimizing text posts on Facebook to get the most responses and engagement from your fans:

- Post consistently. Being consistent in the quality and types of posts you create can help people know what kinds of messages to expect from you and how they tie into your organization. A content calendar can help you plan ahead and make sure posts use a similar message each time. You can:
  - Schedule posts for when most of your audience is online.
  - Highlight days for major events or news.
  - Create targeted messages that tell your story.
  - Don’t post too little or too much. How much you should post depends on every Page and the size of its audience; it’s impossible to give one-size-fits-all recommendation. You need to walk a line between informative and annoying, and only your own experience and tests will tell you where that lies. That said, we recommend that smaller governments post anywhere between once a day and three times a week.
- Post timely content. For example, post about issues that are in the news or if people are celebrating a holiday.
- Use conversational language. Leave the formal press release behind. Facebook is about a more casual, friendly tone.
- Respond quickly to comments on your posts to let fans know you’re listening to feedback.
- Break news. People like using Facebook to let their friends know about important events happening in their
community, so make sure your organization takes advantage of opportunities to post breaking news quickly. Don’t wait for the press release. And keep people updated as the story develops. When organizations posted multiple updates in quick succession during a breaking news event, they saw a 10 percent increase in engagement.

• Be concise. People scroll through the News Feed quickly, so the chances they’re going to stop and read anything longer than a few lines are slim. Stick to important information and pay attention to your word count. Try to get to what’s relevant in your message before the text is truncated.

• Try crowdsourcing. Your citizens are smart — use the power of Facebook to ask for help when you seek to address their concerns. Effective crowdsourcing raises awareness about government initiatives while promoting civic engagement.

• Ask a question. With text posts, your main goal and motivation should be to get people to comment and join the conversation. The best way to do this is by asking short questions that require a short answer.

• An example? See this one-line post from New Hampshire Governor Maggie Hassan that got 234 likes. She wasn’t afraid to be conversational and cheer on her local sports team, and her engagement skyrocketed!

FACEBOOK Q&AS
What is a Facebook Q&A? It’s basically what it sounds like — a way for you to host a live question-and-answer session with your audience on your Facebook Page. It’s a simple way for you to engage with your audience directly from your posts. Think of it as a virtual town hall and encourage your mayor, the head of a department or anyone, really, to participate in a Facebook Q&A to show that you are interested in talking directly with your constituents.

Here’s how it works: Your audience will ask you questions in the comments below your Q&A post. Questions that you answer will appear higher in the comments so your audience knows you’re listening.

Here’s how to host a Facebook Q&A:

• Pick a time. You can host a Facebook Q&A anytime on your Page. We recommend announcing when you’ll be doing the Q&A a few days beforehand so your fans know when to tune in.

• Start the conversation. To get started, click the Q&A icon in the share menu at the top of your Timeline and then click “Start a Q&A” from the dropdown menu. Add a photo of the person hosting it and responding to the questions to personalize the post and prove authenticity. You can call for questions on a specific topic or leave the Q&A open for your audience to ask anything.

• Answer away. Audience questions will appear in the comments below your Q&A post. To answer, simply reply to the audience comments. Answer as many as you like — the pace is up to you. You do not have to respond to every question.

• Moderate. Page admins are able to moderate Q&As just like any other post on Facebook. You can remove comments or ban participants.

• An example? Whitehall, Ohio, hosted a Facebook Q&A with its mayor, Kim Maggard. You can see the post and the conversation here.

• Another example is this Q&A from the mayor of Evanston, Ill. Head to page 26 to read a detailed case study about it.

Don’t see the Q&A option on your page? E-mail gov@fb.com to get access to it.
Your goal with Facebook is to reach the right people: your citizens and constituents. At times, you may want to use it to boost engagement with and awareness of a particular campaign, such as a new public safety drive or the launch of a website, or you may want to encourage people to take a particular action, like sign-up for a new program.

One of the best ways to achieve those goals is through Facebook advertising. You can do this with any budget size, large or small. Advertising on Facebook allows government agencies the ability to reach a specific audience with messages that are tailored to them.

You can either drive people to your Facebook page to learn more information, or you can drive people off-Facebook to your website. What's more, Facebook ads allow you to reach people beyond your fans – meaning that you can target people with a message, even if they don't like your page.

For example, government officials may decide they want to run a Facebook ad campaign to drive people to a new website about flu prevention. Then, the page manager can select the relevant target audience – in this case, people in areas with high instances of the flu—and if you're in that audience, Facebook shows you the ad.

You can create an ad right from the admin panel of your Page or you can use the Ads Create Tool, which walks you through the steps.

Be specific about the audiences for different ads; people are more likely to respond to a message crafted just for them.

To make sure your ads look great wherever they're seen on Facebook, check out this ads guide for detailed specifications, such as image dimensions.

In the following pages, we'll detail some tips and tricks to maximize your ads — and your return on investment. However, the process for running effective ads is different for everybody, so we recommend that also you check out this Facebook page on advertising capabilities, and also get in touch with the Facebook team at gov@fb.com for personalized help on running campaigns.

FACEBOOK ADS

**Step 1: Pick an objective.**
The first thing you'll want to do when launching a Facebook ad campaign is to pick your objective. You can build an ad campaign around any of the following goals:

- Send people to your website.
- Increase conversions on your website.
- Boost your posts.
- Promote your Page.
- Get installs of your app.
- Increase engagement in your app.
- Reach people near your business.
- Raise attendance at your event.
- Get people to claim your offer.
- Get video views.
Step 1: Determine your campaign objective.

Before creating ad content, you need to define your end goal. Is your objective to increase conversions or to raise awareness? You need to determine what you want to achieve with your campaign.

Step 2: Choose your ad creative and write your ad content.

You’ll have the option of uploading up to six images so you can easily see which ad performs best and gets the most out of your advertising budget. The best image size to use for your ad depends on what type of ad you’re creating. Before you create your ad image, please visit the Facebook Ads Guide for specifications around the recommended ad image sizes for each ad type.

When creating ad content, follow these guidelines from Facebook:

• Include a clear action you want your audience to take in the body text of your ad.
• Use a simple, eye-catching image that is related to your ad text.
• If you’re advertising a website, include your organization’s name or other key information in the headline.

Step 3: Pick your target audience.

Before creating an ad, know who your target audience is. Think about whom you want to reach, where they are, what their interests are and what their common behavior patterns might be.

1. Location: When defining your audience, you’ll start by selecting where you do business or where the people you want to reach are.

Tip: Facebook will default to your ad account’s country, but be sure to narrow your location to the cities or regions that match your audience. Remember, if you target more than one location, your ads are optimized for your campaign objective and may not necessarily be served evenly across locations.

2. Demographics: Next you’ll need to define the age and gender of your target audience.

Tip: Facebook will default the audience to all ages. If your ad is relevant only to people in a certain age range, you should change it.

3. Interests and behavioral targeting:

These choices let you focus on the people who will be most interested in your message. Select a few interests that describe your audience.

Tip: Put yourself in their shoes. Are they interested in public safety? Do they like the outdoors? You can also define your audience based on their behaviors, such as digital activity, what devices they use, past or intended actions, or travel.

For example, if you’re advertising a healthy living app that’s available only on iOS, you can choose people interested in health and people who use an iOS device to access Facebook. This way, you’re focusing your budget to show ads to people who would be able to download the app.

4. Advanced connection targeting:

Think about whether you want people who already know about your organization on Facebook to see your ad. For example, if you’re running ads to generate awareness about an initiative, the fans of your page might already know about the initiative. You can exclude fans in advanced connections targeting.

5. Custom Audiences and Lookalikes:

With Custom Audiences, you can reach lists of people you already know by targeting based on email addresses or phone numbers. When you use Custom Audiences, you can choose to create a Lookalike Audience that targets people who are similar to your Custom Audiences list. Lookalike Audiences help you reach people who are similar to your current audience for fan acquisition, site registration, off-Facebook clicks and brand awareness. Lookalike audiences can also be created off of the fan base of your page.

MOBILE ADVERTISING ON FACEBOOK

As discussed earlier in this guide, Facebook is a mobile-first company — and as such, its mobile advertising options have increased significantly. In fact, of the 1.32 billion people who use Facebook each month, 399 million, or roughly a third, log in only with their phones. Additionally, Facebook’s monthly user base has grown 14 percent year over year, while its mobile user base has grown much more, at 31 percent. So if you’re conducting an advertising campaign on Facebook, it’s smart to deploy mobile ads as well.

The best thing for you to do? Since most people these days are viewing Facebook on their mobile devices, you should always make sure to run ads in the News Feed as well as the sidebar so you can guarantee your audience is seeing them, no matter the platform.

INTEGRATION OF MARKETING COLLATERAL

Paid advertising campaigns are just one way to raise awareness of your organization’s Page. To make your investment go further, make sure your Facebook Page URL is on all of your external marketing collateral: Link your Page to your website, place the URL on printed marketing materials and mention your Facebook URL in TV and radio ads. This seemingly basic strategy can go a long way in getting more people to like your Page.
Measure Success

You can achieve a lot on Facebook with thoughtful content and strategic advertising, but how do you know if you’re succeeding? How do you use data and information about your audience’s habits to your benefit? Two words: Facebook Insights. Specifically, you should take advantage of Facebook Page Insights and Facebook Audience Insights.

Use Page Insights to understand how people are engaging with your Page. You can:

• View metrics about your Page’s performance.
• Learn which posts have the most engagement.
• See data about when your audience is on Facebook.

With this information, you can look at each of your posts and see which have the most likes, comments and shares. You can use this information to create more of the types of posts your audience is interested in seeing. You can also publish your posts at the time of day when you’re likely to reach more people.

Facebook Audience Insights, on the other hand, provides metrics that let you understand your fans and the kind of posts that will interest and engage them. For example, you might be interested in learning more about the age and gender breakdown of your fans and the posts that have received the most engagement.

With these metrics, you can get to know the people who matter to your agency, so you can understand what matters to them. You’ll be able to learn about their specific locations, interests and behaviors, so you can create messages that will help your Page reach them more effectively.

Using Audience Insights, you can get aggregate anonymous information such as:

• Demographics — Age and gender, lifestyle, education, relationship status, job role and household size.
• Page likes — The top Pages your fans also like in different categories.
• Location and language — Where people live and what languages they speak.
• Facebook usage — How frequently people in your target audience log onto Facebook and what device(s) they are using when they log on.

And you can view this information for three groups of people:

• People on Facebook (the general Facebook audience).
• People connected to your Page or event.
• People in Custom Audiences you’ve already created (an audience made up of your current fans).

Audience Insights is different from Page Insights because it looks at trends about your current or potential customers across Facebook, whereas Page Insights looks at the interactions with your Page (i.e., likes, comments and shares).

Used in tandem, Page and Audience Insights give you powerful metrics and information to discover what your most popular content is, and if it’s reaching the right people.

In addition to measurement tools mentioned above, Facebook also has a partnership with Nielsen, which allows advertisers to measure whether you’ve reached your intended audience or whether your messages resonated with your target audience.
As you set up your Page, it's important to make sure the account is secure. Here are seven things you can do to help keep your account safe:

1. **Pick a strong password**: Use a combination of at least six numbers, letters and punctuation marks.
2. **Make sure your e-mail account(s) is secure**.
3. **Log out of Facebook when you use a computer you share with others**.
4. **Run antivirus software on your computer**.
5. **Add a security question to your account**.
6. **Use extra security features for your account**, such as login approvals.
7. **Think before you click or download anything**.

If your Page does get hacked despite taking these precautions, it may mean that your personal account or the account of someone who works on your Page was hacked.

If it was your account that was hacked, head to this link to secure it. If you think someone else who works on your Page was hacked, please tell that person to go to the Hacked Accounts section of the Help Center to get immediate assistance.
FACEBOOK SUCCESS STORIES

Tips from federal, state and local govies on how they’ve achieved Facebook success
SUCCESS STORY

Department of Veterans Affairs

Communicating authentically with your users

The Department of Veterans Affairs looks to engage Facebook fans with a mix of content. Here are three tips from VA for great posts.

1. Educate and entertain. “We like to call our approach ‘sugar in medicine,’” said Reynaldo Leal, VA Public Affairs Specialist. “A little bit of a sugar, a little bit of medicine. You have to give them the information, because that’s what you’re there for, but you can also give them daily content that your audience looks forward to.”

2. Post at different times of day. “We’re addressing veterans on a national level, so we have to find out what time are our veterans on, what time is our audience on,” Leal said. “Let’s say our last post went up at 3 p.m. ET. Well, we’ve just ignored everyone on the West Coast.”

3. Keep experimenting with what makes a successful post and what reaches your audience. “It’s an art, not a science,” said Megan Molloney, VA’s Director of Digital Media Engagement. “We’ve taken a lot of pieces of like metrics and insights and we’ve sort of just put it into a big equation and sort of tried to do the best we can around it and experiment.”

With nearly 800,000 fans and a mission of connecting with and honoring America’s veterans, The Department of Veteran Affairs Facebook Page must serve many masters. First and foremost, it must educate veterans about important services and news without boring them or turning them away with too many irrelevant links.

So when a team needs to distribute important but somewhat dry information how does it keep the audience entertained and coming back for more?

The team running the VA Facebook Page has developed a successful strategy. It’s found, through trial and error, that humanizing posts, making content personal and analyzing Page metrics comprise the most successful approach.

“We were never looking to be viral in any way, or do any specific campaign,” Leal said. “We just wanted to see who our audience was, and find out what they wanted, and try to give them that on a daily basis. So, by having our audience engaged on a daily basis, when we do have to distribute important information, the fans are already coming to our page because they like the other content we’re putting out on a regular basis.”

One of the ways the VA Page makes sure to be an interesting content destination for veterans on Facebook is through a daily post called #VeteranOfTheDay.
The VA team started these posts about a year ago. They feature a photo of a veteran and a paragraph telling the story of how, where and why that veteran served.

“It’s our most popular segment,” said Tim Hudak, Staff Writer at VA. A recent #VeternOfTheDay post received more than 14,600 likes and more than 3,400 shares.

“That feature is content that people look forward to and are also engaged with,” Leal said. “And in fact, it’s content that’s often audience-generated from people who are submitting veterans to be a part of the feature. So if we consider that our foundation of content for the day, and it’s so popular, and people are returning daily to see it, then everything we share on top of that, it is much, much more well received.”

The team often bases the #VeteranOfTheDay content around an editorial calendar, keeping in mind military anniversaries, dates of note and other important events.

Despite the extremely positive responses to this and other editorial features that VA has put up, the Page is not immune to negative comments or criticism.

“We do have a social media posting policy,” Moloney said “Anything that is, say, bad language or racist we take down. But anything else — negative sentiments, or things we disagree with — we keep up. That’s important to keep up there because in a way, that’s your customer feedback, and even if it is negative you need to display it.”

“Obviously there are trolls out there, people who are going to say whatever they want to say,” Leal said. “But if you look at social media more as a one-way communication, which is outbound, and then turn it into something that’s more of a two-way form of communication, that is customer service. And we really try to do good customer service to serve our veterans. For example, if people post a concern or a negative thought, if we can, we’ll take their information, screen [capture] the issue, and send it over to our counterparts, and see what we can do for follow-ups.”

The daily veteran feature is helping transform a bureaucracy into personable communicator. VA’s Facebook Page has succeeded among the veterans community as a reliable destination for information and inspiring content.

“You just have to give your fans content, good content,” Leal said. “And you have to keep that conversation going and try as best as you can to understand where your audience is coming from.”

The Government’s Guide to Using Facebook

SUCCESS STORY

Leveraging Facebook ads for a tobacco-free Florida

Want to run a successful paid advertising campaign on Facebook? Florida’s hugely successful “Tobacco Free Florida” campaign offers three important tips:

1. Clearly define your advertising goals. The team knew exactly what it wanted from the campaign and how it wanted Facebook to serve that purpose.

2. Target, target, target. The campaign made sure to zero in on specific demographics and made the content relevant to that audience.

3. Don’t forget evaluation. The team consistently evaluated its results, which were especially useful because they were diverse and quantifiable and eventually helped the campaign gain buy-in from leadership.

From sharing weight loss tips to encouraging public safety initiatives, Facebook is a great place for organizations to encourage healthy lifestyles — and many state health departments are looking to use it as a platform to encourage citizens to make healthy decisions regarding personal care.

One such state agency is the Florida Department of Health (DOH), which has successfully promoted its Tobacco Free Florida initiative through a Facebook advertising campaign. So, what’s made the Facebook venture so successful? We sat down with Shannon Hughes, Tobacco Free Florida Bureau Chief, to find out.

To run a successful Facebook campaign, the first step is having a clear idea of what your goals are, Hughes said. In this case, the goals for the broader Tobacco Free Florida media campaign were straightforward and well defined from the outset: The bureau wanted to prevent youth and adults from starting smoking; to promote quitting; and to eliminate secondhand smoke for all Floridians.

DOH officials realized that Facebook would be a highly useful tool in furthering their campaign goals. Overall, their social media plan positioned Tobacco Free Florida as trusted, relevant, and thorough. This strategy not only reached a larger
audience, but also engaged the audience and advanced the campaign’s initiatives using dynamic, multi-dimensional online conversations that were unattainable with traditional media.

So, their next step was to define Facebook’s role and contribution to the campaign goals. The team decided it wanted the Facebook campaign to increase brand awareness, drive people to the Tobacco Free Florida website, and educate the audience about tobacco-related facts.

Having clear objectives of what they were looking to do through Facebook helped officials know what their actions needed to be on a very specific level.

So, what did they do next to achieve these goals?

First, Hughes and her team specifically targeted their Facebook audience. Although they wanted to appeal to a wide variety of demographic groups, their primary target was the cessation audience – adults 18 and up. “Facebook offers that kind of granular targeting,” Hughes said.

Well-targeted campaigns succeed on a number of levels. “We can be certain that the content we’re creating is hitting the people who are going to find it the most relevant,” explained Hughes. “By targeting in that way, we can ensure that our brand remains relevant, and that what we’re doing is engaging. It makes our campaigns more efficient, because we’re only targeting those who will be interested in our content.”

Additionally, the Tobacco Free Florida team collected data and analyzed the results of the Facebook campaign as it progressed. The team examined a variety of metrics, rather than looking only at the number of likes or website hits. Team members chose to look at statistics that measured active engagement, not just audience size.

Repeatedly testing their efforts also helped the Tobacco Free Florida team understand what was working and what wasn’t. There was no magic formula for hitting high markers on the statistics, Hughes explained — rather it was important to experiment and look at the outcomes.

The results came on various levels. On one level, the team collected Facebook statistics to see its reach and the level of engagement beyond the amount of likes. The team also made a lot of progress toward the campaign goals by encouraging its audience to actively engage with the content on the Facebook Page.

DOH, the metrics that were relevant to judge engagement were diverse — video views, clicks to its website, comments and shares.

The other form of results the team looked at were tobacco use statistics among the Florida population to see how the message was being received. Florida has seen a massive drop in smoking rates among youth and adults. As of 2013, the year with the most recent data available, the adult smoking rate in Florida is 16.8 percent of adults and 4.3 percent of youth, which is significantly lower than the national average: 17.8 percent of adults and 23.3 percent of high school students, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

What’s a big bonus for an obviously successful government Facebook campaign? Massive support from the top. “I’m happy to say that we have done such a great job with this program that there’s a high level of trust from the Media Marketing Manager for Tobacco Free Florida… all the way up to the State Surgeon General,” Hughes said. “They’re really pleased with this program.”
SUCCESS STORY

Henrico County, Virginia

Using Facebook for information distribution during inclement weather

Trying to grow your office’s Facebook reach, but don’t know what to post? Henrico County, Va., officials have three pieces of sound advice on what type of content will increase the size of your audience:

1. Include good news as well as bad news. People appreciate useful information, even if it’s regarding difficult predicaments such as inclement weather.

2. Be active on Facebook every day, even if it’s not with original content. The county office found that even by sharing or liking posts from other Pages, the audience grew.

3. Don’t worry if you have a small staff and can’t micromanage your Facebook Page. Being active once a day is still helpful, and drawing on other related offices’ Facebook Pages will help bolster your content without requiring much time of your staff.

For many organizations, Facebook is a place to celebrate big wins and share events or causes that people are excited about. It’s not generally seen as a place to advertise the negative aspects of conducting daily governing affairs. There’s a natural tendency for many Facebookers to downplay life’s difficulties — no one wants to seem like a downer.

But it can be highly useful to share the negatives and the positives, and it will serve your organization well in the long run to be honest. Cristol Klevinsky, Management Specialist in the County Manager’s Office for Henrico County, Va., shared with us some insights into why it’s good for government to include all news on Facebook.

Henrico County wanted to grow its Facebook presence, and Klevinsky took charge of making it happen. Eventually, the Page achieved strong growth and increased its following at an exponential rate. The winter of 2014 especially incited growth at a level the Henrico County Facebook team had never seen before. In January, it had 86 new followers, in February that
number was 57, and in March and April combined, it was 68. According to Klevinsky, these numbers were unusually high.

She said that her first inclination in tackling the goal of growing the audience was to publish “fun” posts exclusively. The county office found that her audience was responding well to positive, good-vibes content. “Pictures go a long way…. For instance, the police division has a rabies clinic a few times a year, so I always put their information and a picture of a dog and a cat up there, and that of course has a really good reach,” she said.

But then when the notorious winter of 2013-14 hit, the county office found that serious posts helped grow the audience as well. “Some of it was very positive good news and people would like or share, and then it did draw some new followers,” Klevinsky said. “But a lot of it was related to the weather incidents we were having in the area.” People appreciated the information because although it wasn’t fluffy and fun, it was useful.

And this finding doesn’t apply only to weather-related incidents, but also other types of posts. “In a day where everyone’s trying to be somewhat of an open book, I think it’s good that you can post or share good news and bad news related to your local government,” Klevinsky said.

What other factors allowed Henrico County’s Facebook Page to flourish? Klevinsky had some additional tips on how to grow an audience.

Because she represents a relatively small local government, there’s not always something of urgency or huge significance to post on the Page. But that’s OK, she said. There are other ways to engage daily — and engaging each day is important, even if it’s not original content.

“I go about either liking or sharing other organizations’ posts. And that in itself generates a lot of reach. It can come back and provide likes to your page,” she said.

“Electronically supporting other organizations looks good on your locality.” It’s karma!

But at the same time, the Henrico County team has to balance the frequency of its posts. Local governments don’t always have large staffs, which can make it difficult to monitor and respond to a vast number of posts.

Overall, Klevinsky has great hopes for even higher levels of Facebook popularity for Henrico County. “Being manned by a very small staff, I think we’re doing pretty well. I’m happy with our progress,” she said.
SUCCESS STORY
City of Burnsville, Minnesota

How to host a virtual fire department ‘ride-along’ on Facebook

Thinking about a real-time “day-in-the-life” campaign on Facebook? The city of Burnsville, Minn., made some key points gleaned from its hugely successful virtual ride-along with the local fire department:

1. Plan in advance. The team promoted the campaign in advance and assembled facts, quotes and snippets to post in case the day of the event was uneventful.

2. Use videos, photos and trivia. These types of post generated much more attention than did plain text.

3. Think about what knowledge you’re trying to share, and use the campaign to educate the public. The Burnsville team wanted its audience to understand that the medical and fire response units were tied together.

Firefighters and other public servants have an undoubtedly alluring profession. But very few people know what it actually like to be a firefighter or a police officer on an everyday basis. “Day-in-the-life” social media campaigns can be a great outreach and engagement tool for government offices looking to showcase the ins and outs of government and public service jobs.

We sat down with Carissa Larsen, Communications Specialist for the City of Burnsville, Minn., to talk about the virtual ride-along with the local fire department that she spearheaded.

First, Burnsville officials decided to invest in this campaign in the first place in order to educate people about the department. Specifically, they wanted people to know that the fire and medical services were one unit. This is useful information for citizens to have, because people had been confused when they called an
ambulance and firefighters came to their door. They also wanted people to know that as opposed to a volunteer-based fire department, theirs was a full-time, career organization.

Additionally, the city was trying to increase its engagement on social media. Its goal has been to conduct one interesting social media campaign every year, and officials had identified Facebook as an effective way of communicating with constituents and developing reach. A virtual “day-in-the-life” campaign seemed like an interesting and educational way of engaging with the public and building their audience.

The process to execute this day in the life campaign was harder work and more hands-on than other daily social media activity, but Larsen wanted to draw our attention to a couple of key features that she thought made it a successful undertaking.

First, the city advertised the event for only three or four days leading up to it. “We didn’t do a big lead time to promotion because social media’s so fast that it didn’t make a lot of sense to remind people, or let people know weeks in advance,” she explained.

Also, the virtual ride-along didn’t exclude anything. Larsen posted about everything that happened for the firefighters from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. one day, including what they did for lunch and how they responded to a 911 call from a man in cardiac arrest. It happened to be an eventful day in the field, but Larsen told us that the team had prepared facts and text ahead of time to post in case there were lags in activity.

Larsen published a variety of updates and found that trivia and photos got the most attention and engagement, as opposed to just text updates on what was happening. The trivia especially encouraged the audience to interact.

This virtual ride-along clearly took a lot of work and a great deal of advance planning, but it was worth it in the end, and the Burnsville results show that.

“Between the time we started promoting through the end of the event, we got 11 new followers on Facebook and 20 new followers on Twitter,” Larsen said. “So for an event that only lasted a day, it increased our followers by 1 percent on Facebook, which doesn’t sound like a lot, but it was one day. For us, that was huge.”

Although it took a great deal of effort, the extra work paid off. Larsen is hoping to duplicate the campaign for other departments such as police and recreation, and for city construction crews.
SUCCESS STORY
City of Evanston, Illinois
How to host a successful Facebook Q&A with your mayor

Want to run a successful Facebook question-and-answer session with a member of your government? Evanston, Ill., offers these three important tips:

1. Promote the Q&A ahead of time and encourage people to submit questions in advance to fill any downtime during the actual Q&A.

2. Have somebody typing responses and somebody sorting questions, so the main participant of the Q&A can focus on coming up with thoughtful answers.

3. Afterward, follow up with people whose questions you couldn’t get to — it’s a great way to show dedication and responsiveness to engaged users.

Town halls and question-and-answer sessions have long been a staple of democracy in the United States. But how do you engage with your constituents in a digital world where they are harder to access — and your political leaders might be harder to access as well?

The mayor of Evanston, Ill., Elizabeth Tisdahl, decided to turn to Facebook. She and her team, including Luke Stowe, Digital Services Coordinator at the City Manager’s Office, decided to host a Facebook Q&A so citizens could ask her anything they liked.

“It was just a neat way to connect with our audience and the residents of Evanston,” Stowe said.

And the residents seemed to think so, too. They asked several dozen questions on everything from bike safety to the status of a new grocery store development.

A few examples of questions and answers are featured above.
The questions didn’t come flowing in on their own, though. Stowe stressed that promotion ahead of the Q&A was a crucial part of the event’s success. He and the mayor’s team also encouraged folks to submit questions before the event.

“We issued a news release, and we encouraged people to submit questions in advance, so that way we would have several questions to choose from to begin with,” Stowe said. “And then it would also give us time — if it’s a question that needed some data or some additional follow-up — it gave us a little bit of time to prepare for that. And if there ever was a quiet moment during the town hall, that was a great time for us to insert a pre-submitted question.”

The Q&A was a hit. “When we took a snapshot right after the town hall was over, I knew the organic reach at that moment right when we ended was over 1,500 people,” Stowe said. “Then we Storified it and then shared that on social media and on our website afterwards.”

Stowe said other tips for hosting a successful Facebook Q&A or town hall include:

- Invite the press. “We had at least one reporter come to that particular Facebook town hall. So I think it’s just good from a transparency standpoint to invite the media to come. And they appreciate the ability to sit in on something like that as well.”

- Have a team at the ready for typing and sorting questions. “We had myself and one other person basically typing the mayor’s responses, so we would read the question to the mayor, she would respond, and then I would start typing up the answer, and then my colleague who was also helping me, she would ask the next question. That sped it up a little bit, so the mayor wasn’t having to wait for me to finish typing my answer.”

- Use it as an opportunity for citizen follow-up. During the one-hour town hall, the mayor couldn’t get to everyone’s question. “We followed up with them later, maybe e-mailed them or messaged them through Facebook to further answer their question or do a follow-up or submit a service request.”

Stowe and the mayor are planning another Facebook Q&A for 2015. Other city officials might do the same thing.

“We might even conduct it with a department head,” said Stowe. “Let’s say the police chief or the director of public works. We think it would be really interesting.”
SUCCESS STORY
City of Menlo Park, California
Using Facebook video to turn a negative into a positive

From posting videos to keeping readers coming back for content, the city of Menlo Park has several tips for how to maintain and active local government Facebook page.

1. Be mindful of the pace of posts. “I don’t want to do 20 posts in one week and three the next,” said Clay Curtin, Assistant to the City Manager. “Try to be consistent.”

2. When posting video, try uploading directly to Facebook instead of YouTube. “We uploaded our video to both Facebook and YouTube – it got almost no traction on YouTube.”

3. Don’t be afraid of paid ads, even if you have a small budget. “We boost posts and do paid ads more now,” said Curtin. “For instance, we recently posted a family fitness event, so we targeted the audience of that ad down to specific fitness and family groups and got good return.”

What happens when a Tree City USA community, known for its protection of heritage trees, decides to take down a popular, ancient oak?

In most communities, there would be long-lasting outrage and rebukes. But if you’re the city of Menlo Park, California, you might turn to a lively Facebook video to change the course of the conversation.

In October of 2014, a prized Italian stone pine in the city’s Fremont Park was removed because it posed an imminent hazard due to root failure and a severe lean that gave the tree much of its unique character. The community was in uproar about this removal.

“We’re a community that is very protective of its trees,” said Clay Curtin, Assistant to the City Manager of Menlo Park, who runs the city’s Facebook page. “Normally we give 15-day notice when a tree has to be removed, but in this case the danger of the tree falling was quite imminent and
we had to get it out of there more quickly than normal.”

Curtin said this caused a great deal of commotion in the community. “We even had a man show up and chain himself to the tree before it was taken down, which almost resulted in his arrest.”

Nevertheless, the tree came down, and negative comments started flowing in on social media. To help combat the problem and start a more positive conversation, the city’s public works department brought in a chainsaw artist who carved the stump of the tree into a bench and whimsical artwork – then posted a native Facebook time-lapse video of the work to the city Facebook page.

The video worked to shift the conversation. It’s since received over 4,100 views, nearly 250 likes, and dozens of comments, including the following:

I had been wondering why it had suddenly been taken down, and am relieved to see art springing out of the remnant!

This is such a cool video! Love the recycling of the tree, too!

Italian stone pines break away branches all the time, so better to get rid of the hazard, and make something good from it!

Curtin said the posting of the video using the Facebook platform was crucial to changing the conversation.

The video was posted to YouTube and got 56 views – and Curtin said where the conversation really took off was on Facebook.

“We typically don’t get too many comments, but it really started a conversation on Facebook,” he said. “The Facebook video platform is great. I feel like by posting there, people are much more likely to interact with you.”
GovLoop asked our public-sector audience for the questions they most wanted answered by Facebook. Below are the top 10 most-asked questions about Facebook Pages by the public sector — and answers straight from Facebook.

1. Is it legal to ban users from Facebook on a public government page?

While Facebook permits the banning of someone from a Page, this is a question best put to your legal counsel. Remember that when you ban someone from your Page, you aren't banning him or her from Facebook. Just as you wouldn't allow a protestor to sit in your office, but would allow them to protest on the sidewalk, you don't necessarily have to allow anyone to be on your Page. But again, each government will need to work with its legal counsel to determine what works best for it.

2. Is there a way to approve comments to posts prior to them appearing?

There is not. Real-time engagement is part of what makes content on Facebook so successful. You can turn on the profanity filter in your settings or put words in the moderation blocklist so they don't appear on your page. You can find out more about that here: https://www.facebook.com/help/131671940241729

3. How do you turn off ratings and check-ins?

To remove ratings and check-ins you must remove the address from your Page. You can do this by going to your Page's “About” section and choosing to edit the address. Should you wish to keep the address, you can report any reviews that don't have anything to do with your Page by following the instructions here: https://www.facebook.com/help/439579999521224
4. **What archiving capabilities does Facebook offer?**

Facebook doesn't offer any archiving capabilities for Pages. However, there are a few other options to consider:

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<th>Option</th>
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<tr>
<td>Don't do anything extra and just search for posts on the Page should you get a request.</td>
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<tr>
<td>On a monthly or quarterly basis, do a page post export in Page Insights, which offers links to every post done in that time period as well as the text. Save this somewhere on your own servers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take a screen shot of every post and save it either in a folder or a Microsoft Word document.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use a third-party source, such as ArchiveSocial. But know that there is a cost associated with this service.</td>
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5. **How can Pages interact with other Pages?**

Choose to use Facebook as the Page you manage and then comment on the other Pages’ posts. You can find instructions on using Facebook as a Page here: [https://www.facebook.com/help/168135343245607](https://www.facebook.com/help/168135343245607)

6. **Why don’t you allow the creation of a business or organization Facebook Page that’s not tied to a personal account?**

Shared logins or logins not attached to a personal profile are very insecure and have led to many problems for Page managers. Because of this, we now require Page admins to use their personal accounts to manage a Page. If every admin has our security settings turned on ([more info here](#)), then this is the safest way to manage a Page. Moreover, we offer many options for admins to make sure they are using Facebook as the Page and not their personal profile.

7. **Why can’t the city claim the location page and when people check-in have it go to the official site?**

Location Pages are Pages created by Facebook to help users find all the information they might want about a certain location. We don’t allow any single person or organization to own these as there are many that could legitimately say they have a right to the location Page. Instead, we ask each organization to be specific on who they are in their Page name.

8. **What’s the best way for a government Page to get verified?**

Submit a request to [gov@fb.com](mailto:gov@fb.com) and we will evaluate it based on our criteria.

9. **Why can’t there be special rules or advertising rates for nonprofits or governments?**

Facebook offers many free tools for organizations. We want to help nonprofits and governments understand the best practices for sharing quality content that will help them reach more people.

10. **How can I ensure the right people are seeing our content on Facebook?**

Use your Page insights on a regular basis to see how many people your posts are reaching each week, and which individual posts are getting the most engagement. Continuously test and refine the types of content you post to make sure it’s something your fans want to see and find valuable. Facebook ads are a great way to ensure your content gets in front of the right people.
This guide is 31 pages chock-full of useful, relevant and digestible information aimed at getting your Facebook Page running at its full potential. But we know that we aren’t able to cover absolutely everything. To help you out a little bit more, we’ve created this list of links to other resources that will give you additional information and answers.
NEXT STEPS:
THE FACEBOOK FOR GOVERNMENT CHECKLIST

Are you doing everything you can to make your organization’s Page the best it can be? Use this easy 11-step checklist to make sure you’re following our tips.

- Make sure your Page imagery is on point (add an updated cover photo and profile photo that are properly sized and visually interesting).
- Rewrite your About section to be pithy and up-to-date.
- Try out a content calendar to optimize posts.
- New to Facebook ads? Try boosting a post.
- Run an insights report. It will provide information that will help your posts by cuing you in to what time your audience is visiting your Page, the top three most popular posts of the past month and the basic demographic makeup of your audience.
- Test out adding a video directly to Facebook.
- Make sure you’re responding politely and relevantly to citizen questions and comments on your Facebook page — even if the comments are not positive.
- Check your security settings and update the password to your personal account.
- Identify someone to be the focus of an upcoming Facebook Q&A. It could be your mayor, a department head or anybody of interest to your community.
- Update your terms of service language and commenting policy to match your goals.
- Download the Facebook Pages Manager app so you can access your Page, even on the go.

LINKS FROM FACEBOOK:

- Facebook Help Center
- Getting started building a Facebook Page
- Facebook’s glossary of terms
- Facebook’s glossary of ad terms
- More details on using Page Insights
- Facebook Media (this is officially a microsite geared toward news organizations, politicians and brands, but contains many helpful tips for government Pages, too)
- Facebook resources for creating ads
- Facebook’s newsroom (info about latest updates and press releases)
ABOUT FACEBOOK

Founded in 2004, Facebook’s mission is to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected. People use Facebook to stay connected with friends and family, to discover what’s going on in the world, and to share and express what matters to them.

ABOUT GOVLOOP

GovLoop’s mission is to “connect government to improve government.” We aim to inspire public-sector professionals by serving as the knowledge network for government. GovLoop connects more than 150,000 members, fostering cross-government collaboration, solving common problems and advancing government careers. GovLoop is headquartered in Washington, D.C., with a team of dedicated professionals who share a commitment to connect and improve government.

For more information about this report, please reach out to info@govloop.com.

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