

This FAQ is based on questions received during our “2020 Crucial Conversations – Actionable Tips for Public Communicators” webinar with Kristy Dalton, founder and CEO of Government Social Media and Ray Carey, CEO of ArchiveSocial.

[Click here to listen to the webinar recording.](#)

01

How and when can you introduce fun/humorous copy and personality in content again?

Humor is a very delicate balance and it really boils down to your current tone, what you're known for, as well as your community. Consider what will resonate with them best, and ask yourself why you're using humor and what value it provides. Don't impede on important messages and be cautious when responding to groups as your page. As humor is subjective, it's a good idea to run your messaging past peers before posting and to ask yourself what could go wrong. If you have any degree of uncertainty, it's probably best not to post it.

02

How do you handle negative comments & should you limit your accounts to where no one can leave one?

When facing negative comments, in general you should hold it up to your social media policy and follow those established guidelines. There are certain policies and practices that allow for hiding negative comments. While you don't have to answer everything, when deciding if you should respond or not, you should assess the comments on a scale of "does this need a response or is it purely designed to trigger"? Sometimes there can be comments wrapped up in negativity that you can actually answer and that will be helpful to your community. Lastly, if you can't monitor all of the comments, keep in mind that you have an obligation to communicate to your agency where you are seeing, and to not be a wall. And remember, while there are social media platforms where you must allow comments, there is a time and a place for using social media platforms that don't allow comments. Not all messages need to be delivered on a platform that could potentially invite so much moderation as to make it a drain rather than a boost to your office.

03

What recourse can an agency take to remove inappropriate or vulgar posts?

If you don't already have a social media policy, work with your team and legal counsel to develop one. This will outline the consequences of abusive or off-topic comments. Make sure your team knows the rules. On Facebook, you do have the option to report posts and to block words not allowed on your page. You can also set your profanity filter to strong, and Facebook will hide comments for you.

#### 04 How do you convince executives to get active on social media when they're hesitant because of possible negative comments?

Social media is a great way to humanize your agency and/or official, and show off some personality. As a trusted resource to your community, you can't let negative comments stop you from protecting your public and people, and sharing necessary information, updates, and clarifying misinformation. Social media is also great in a crisis, not only for you to reach your audience and let them know everything is okay, but for your audience to reach you with updates and videos. With an established social media policy, comment moderation guide, and a way to capture, monitor, and retain your social media, you will be in a good place to take on any potential negativity and protect your agency.

#### 05 How do you push back on misinformation?

It's important you don't react emotionally, and respond with facts. If a negative comment is attempting to defame someone by saying they have committed a crime, that's libel. And depending on your social media policy, you may be able to delete that or any dangerously wrong information meant to mislead followers. With the caveat that you have good social media archiving in place. In general, do your best to stay on topic and steer any off-topic or negative comments offline. Offer your audience the right information, thank any negative posts for their feedback, and take the conversation offline with the offer of a phone call or by directing them to an FAQ page. If you work in public safety, and someone has commented on something that's potentially dangerous, you should respond immediately.

#### 06 How can law enforcement thank the community for their support without being tone deaf to those upset right now?

The words we choose to use can have a tremendous impact, and no matter what you say, be genuine. A statement thanking the community for their support could be misinterpreted, as any statement can when emotions run high. Some agencies are opening, or strengthening, dialog with their community, and are able to authentically incorporate that fact in their statements thanking supporters, but also recognizing the gravity of the situation.

#### 07 Should you turn off tagging capabilities on Facebook and Twitter?

It's certainly not out of the norm for public sector agencies to have tagging features turned off on social platforms that allow it. Especially during times of crisis, some agencies have difficulty keeping up with all the notifications.

## 08 Should you delete, hide, or turn off comments on your posts?

Try to avoid hiding comments on Facebook, as users aren't aware it is hidden and the conversation can still continue. You have to allow your public to exercise their first amendment rights. Just because you don't like what they say, doesn't mean they can't say it. But what you permit, you promote. If you don't have a social media policy, work with your team and legal counsel to create one. This will outline the behavior you will allow or not allow on your page, and help with the negative comments that you have to answer quickly and consistently. Additionally, follow a comment moderation guide. This commenting policy should allow moderation of inappropriate and irrelevant content, while still respecting relevant opinions and First Amendment concerns. If you do hide or delete a post, make sure you do it quickly, before people realize, and only if you have a great social media archiving service.

## 09 How do you decompress and avoid burnout?

Since social media is 24/7 and accessible from just about anywhere, it can create unrealistic user expectations that their questions will be answered around the clock. It's important you have a schedule for monitoring to avoid burnout. In general, you always want to try your best to leave it behind and not dwell on the negative. But some days that can be easier said than done. Try and find something fun and engaging to take your mind off of it, take a break from social media, snooze your personal profile, and do something that you enjoy or find relaxing. Give your brain as much predictability & routine as you can, and lower your expectations for yourself. You have to be okay with not replying to everyone. Try to give yourself something to look forward to by building Micro-joys into your day. You can also find support amongst friends and talk it out, or read about others going through the same thing, like posts on the GSMCON Facebook Group. And for Chrome users, check out the Newsfeed Burner extension to block feeds.

## 10 How do you handle negativity on social media in general?

In general, there are a few best practices to help deal with negative comments.

- Don't react emotionally
- Respond with facts
- Stay polite and professional
- Steer negative conversations offline
- Create a schedule for monitoring social accounts
- Protect your public from bullies or incorrect information – especially in disasters
- Create a social media policy that outlines the consequences of abusive or off-topic comments
- If you don't have the resources for moderators, there are tools out there for every platform. Leverage things like Facebook's option to report posts, block words, & set your profanity filter to strong
- Create a comment moderation guide
- Archive, monitor and retain your social media. As no policy or guide is foolproof