

# Social Media Strategy & Marketing Guidelines

June 2010

**Community &  
Media Relations**  
1435 Water Street  
Kelowna, BC V1Y 1J4  
TEL 250 469-8663  
FAX 250 862-3370  
ask@kelowna.ca

**kelowna.ca**

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**PURPOSE**

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Digital Technology has revolutionized the way we communicate and share information. As a City, we need to understand, monitor and use these technologies appropriately so we can operate effectively in an increasingly digital world.

This guide is intended to be a living document that provides an introduction to Social Media and an overview of how the City uses Social Media as a marketing and communications tool. City employees, departments or outside agencies acting on behalf of the City may utilize these guidelines for appropriate uses of Social Media and as conduct guidelines. If you are a City employee or contractor creating or contributing to blogs, microblogs, wikis, social networks, virtual worlds, or any other kind of social media both on and off the kelowna.ca domain, these guidelines are applicable. The City of Kelowna expects all who participate in social media on behalf of the City to understand and follow these guidelines. These guidelines will evolve as new technologies and social networking tools emerge.

**ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA**

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Social Media refers to online e-technologies and practices that are used to share opinions and information, promote discussion and build relationships. There are a variety of different platforms and formats within social media.

Types:

Micro-blogging	-Twitter
Blogging	-blogger -Wordpress -TypePad, -Other non-branded blogging platforms
Video sharing	Youtube
Photo sharing	-Flickr -picasa

	-photobucket
Document sharing	-google docs -slideshare
Bookmarking	-digg -de.lic.ious -reddit
Social Networking	-Linkedin - professionals -Facebook – casual -MySpace -Twitter
Forums	-mainly topical and often self-developed (non-branded)
Wikis	Wikipedia
Virtual Worlds	Foursquare, Sims

Each platform uses different communication styles (ie. short 140 character sentences (Twitter) vs. video (youtube)) and each has unique stakeholder group(s). The above list is just a few major examples of social media platforms in 2010. In reality there are thousands of smaller sites with increasingly niche user groups.

The longevity of these social media sites is unknown. Even some of the more popular sites, such as MySpace have seen a decline in usage as users turn to new evolving platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.

### Why does the City use Social Media?

Social Media is based on simple unwritten premises of transparency, sharing and relationship. Due to its public nature, discussion happens out in the open, providing a safe and socially acceptable space for anyone to weigh in on the discussion. As public bodies work towards the idea of ‘open government’ and gov2.0, these tools allow the City to work with residents and businesses – sharing our wealth of knowledge.

Social Media is a great way to connect with residents, customers or stakeholders and vice versa. Trends indicate that modern residents want to play an active - or at least - vocal role in government, breaking down the traditional Big Brother and ‘them’ vs. ‘us’ mentality. Social Media also affords the City the opportunity to reach an even wider audience - particularly those not using traditional communication tools (news releases, newspaper advertising etc) - and stakeholders around the world.

On a macro level, good use of social media will also help the City better understand, respond to and attract the attention of specific audiences. This use corresponds directly with the City’s focus on providing excellent customer service.

## POLICY

Social Media practices and accounts are overseen by the Community & Media Relations department in conjunction with the Web-Governance Committee.

As with other communication tools, such as email and telephone calls, employees engaging in Social Media must abide by the City’s **Code of Ethics Policy, Media Relations Policy, Social Media Policy and Visual Identity Guidelines**. It is expected that employees act as an ambassador for the City – both on an off the job - with full knowledge of their rights and responsibilities under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Social Media may be used only as a business practice and not for personal reasons during business hours.

While all city staff have access to Social media sites, those desiring to engage actively on behalf of the City must submit an application based on strong business objectives. Applications will be reviewed by Community & Media Relations and the Web-Governance Committee on a case-by-case basis. Applications must include the applicant’s signature under the memorandum of understanding and a manager or supervisor’s signature.

Applications will be reviewed by Community & Media Relations on a case-by-case basis. Only applications with a strong business case will be approved.

Once approved, account logins & passwords will be provided by Community & Media Relations. Upon an employee's departure from the City, passwords to official accounts will be changed.

## **STAFF INVOLVEMENT & RESPONSIBILITIES**

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### **Community & Media Relations**

With expertise in public engagement, branding and issues management, Community & Media Relations will maintain and monitor all official City of Kelowna social media channels.

Community & Media Relations will maintain a list of social media accounts and current passwords. Other Marketing & Communications Coordinators will have access to these channels to use for promotion of campaigns as appropriate. New social media sites and/or additional channels will be evaluated for their business and marketing need on an individual basis with the Web Coordinator/Communications Director and/or the Web-Governance committee. A strong marketing case, research and manager approval should accompany this request. As added, new accounts must abide by the guidelines laid out in this manual.

Community & Media Relations will be responsible for:

- identifying relevant social media sites and using them regularly in order to gain understanding of technology & audience
- Monitoring sites for brand mentions and inaccuracies/misinformation.
- Evaluating audiences and markets
- Maintaining branding and visual identity standards across all platforms including official city names etc.
- Web-based media relations (forwarded to appropriate personnel)
- Web-based issues management (forwarded to appropriate personnel)
- Social Media strategic planning
- Updating this guidebook as necessary, including platform profiles (appendices) as new information/trends/statistics emerge.

### **Information Services**

Browser access to social media sites is provided by the Information Services department (IS). Social media access may be withdrawn by IS based on misuse of these sites or policy changes.

### **Consultants/Arms-length Organizations**

Consultants and Arms-length Organizations interested in engaging in social media on the City's behalf must obtain written permission from Community & Media Relations before initiating accounts or participating online. As with other City users, each individual must adhere to the City's Code of Ethics and follow the guidelines laid out in this manual.

### **Other staff**

As social media technologies emerge and the web changes, there is a need for city employees to access social media based sites, such as forums, wiki, blogs and streaming video, as a business tool. Access to personal social media sites during work hours is unnecessary and an inappropriate use of company property and time. Employees found abusing this access will be disciplined appropriately.

While these sites are available at work, staff may not create official city channels, blog, comment or tweet on the City's behalf without the permission of Community & Media Relations. Should they want to actively engage in social media, an application process must be followed. Any instance of a need to comment or respond via a social media channel (i.e. a forum - see Appendix 6) should be vetted through Community & Media Relations as according to the Media Relations Policy.

**Council**

Official City channels should not be used to promote opinions or political campaigns. As such, members of council should participate in social media of their own accord. Council is accountable to the public and should abide by their legal responsibilities, avoiding conflict of interest and respecting confidentiality, as laid out in the Community Charter. Members of Council and elections candidates are free to follow/fan the city, abiding by the City’s posting guidelines (below). Retweets and referrals to City channels are appreciated.

**PROCESS CHARTS**

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I want to...

**Create a facebook page or twitter account.**



**Respond to a forum comment**



**SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY**

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The City of Kelowna approaches Social Media as a communication tool that should be evaluated on an individual and business case level. The decision to use social media technologies is a business decision, not a technology or popularity-based decision. Each department or campaign must evaluate the appropriateness of using social media individually - considering the overall goals and objectives of the campaign, costs to the department and the capabilities, effectiveness, pitfalls and potential benefits of the medium.

**Goals:**

1. to become more responsive to residents/stakeholders
2. to increase awareness of City programs and initiatives and be proactive in telling the City’s story/perspective
3. to monitor and incorporate audience feedback into your organization more quickly and effectively than has happened traditionally
4. to make the City brand a little more “human” to the outside world, and show people the smarts, personality and passion of the people behind the logo
5. to become a trustworthy source in order to be able to gently and politely correct misinformation or provide superior customer service.

**Objectives**

Social Media Objectives should be developed on a case-by-case basis. Objective should be measurable.

## Linking

All social media sites should link users back to kelowna.ca for full (or further) information. Remember to maintain up-to-date webpages when engaging in social media use.

## Tone

The city strives to use a 'human' tone on social media sites. While we desire for City channels to have personality, at this time corporate channels should not be affiliated with an individual person or employee voice. Additionally, it is important to remember that each Social Media platform has a tone of their own. What might be acceptable on Tumblr might be considered spam on Facebook. A specific style of writing might spread on Twitter but fail on FriendFeed. Understanding that each site is different and then customizing your message ensures success on each respective site.

## Branding

All social networking sites shall follow branding standards as laid out in the Visual Identity Guide, clearly indicate they are maintained by the City of Kelowna and shall have City contact information prominently displayed.

Official City of Kelowna Channels: The City will aim to avoid diluting the corporate identity through multiple channels on the same band; however, it may occasionally be more appropriate for a particular campaign to have it's own account. These will be considered when:

- The subject matter is specific or engages a niche target audience
- Arms length organization (ie, torch relay)

At this time all social media presence is branded corporately. In the future, the city may consider adding more personal profiles as demand and need grows. Example: LauraW\_cityofkelowna

## Best practices

As each Social Media site is unique, it is good practice to research the best practices for each channel. However, in general:

- Be credible
- Be consistent
- Be responsive
- Be integrated
- Be a government employee

Always remember that participation online results in your comments being permanently available and open to be being re-published in other media. Be aware that engaging in Social media may also attract Media interest in you as an individual; so proceed with care whether you are participating in an official or personal capacity.

Best practices suggest that you stay within your legal framework, subject expertise and be aware that libel, defamation, copyright and data protection laws apply. Do not disclose information, make comments or engage in activity on behalf of the City until authorized to do so. This authority may already be delegated or granted to another.

## Disclaimer/Posting guidelines

The City of Kelowna strives for a balanced online dialogue. If the content is positive or negative and in context to the conversation, then we approve the content, regardless of whether it's favorable or unfavorable to the City. However if the content is ugly, offensive, denigrating and completely out of context, the content should be rejected and/or removed.

All open forums/walls/comment sections should be moderated and a disclaimer posted where it can be seen and referenced easily.

Disclaimers should include the following information for the users.

1. Goal of the forum/wall
2. Invitation
3. Posting guidelines

Disclaimer Example:

This forum is a place of discussion, information and news about the City of Kelowna's Park system. Your opinions and feedback are welcome so long as they are presented in an objective and respectful way. Please keep your comments family-friendly and follow our posting guidelines.

Posting Guidelines Example:

Comments posted to this page will be monitored. The City reserves the right to remove inappropriate comments including those that have obscene language or sexual content, threaten or defame any person or organization, violate the legal ownership interest of another party, support or oppose political candidates or ballot propositions, promote illegal activity, promote commercial services or products or are not topically related to the subject of the forum or a particular posting.

You participate at your own risk, taking personal responsibility for your comments, your username and any information provided.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING**

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### **Purpose**

Looking at Social Media as a marketing tool, it should first be evaluated on campaign goals and objectives. Ask yourself what you are trying to accomplish: are you trying to inform, engage or change behavior? While Social Media is a good tool for informing audiences, it should be used primarily as an engagement tool.

### **Costs/budget**

While most social media accounts are cost-free start up, investment comes in terms of staff time to resource and monitor these channels. Return on Investment is difficult to calculate when it comes to Social Media, however, value and costs should be weighed seriously as with any other communication tool. Publishing to and monitoring each channel is estimated at around one (1) hour per day: evaluating each channel is expected to take one (1) full day every three (3) months.

### **Timing**

As with any communication piece, timing is everything. Much of Social Media happens in real time. Time your messages, postings or tweets to your audience for maximum exposure. For example, if you are looking to engage students – you should probably hold your posting until after school ends.

### **Audience**

Each social media has a unique audience. See the appendices for summaries of each major social media site.

## **APPENDICES – PLATFORM PROFILES**

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The following appendices provide an overview of each social media platform in which the City of Kelowna maintains a presence.

Appendix 1 – Microblogging

Appendix 2 – Social Networks (Facebook, LinkedIn)

Appendix 3 – Photosharing (Flickr)

Appendix 4 – Video

Appendix 5 – Blogging

Appendix 6 – Forums

## APPENDIX 1 – MICROBLOGGING

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### Twitter:

Twitter is a real time micro-blogging platform that allows users to post “tweets”, 140-character messages, which are based on the question “What’s happening?” To tweet, an account is set up which, provides the user a unique username and the ability to follow other users or be followed. A relatively simple platform, most users access Twitter through third party API applications such as TweetDeck or Hootsuite rather than using Twitter.com.

At its basic level, Twitter is a real time, public search function in which conversations centre on sharing topical observations or thoughts or information, including videos, pictures or websites, via a shortened link<sup>1</sup>. Discussion topics are grouped together through the use of ‘hash tags,’ user-generated keywords which start with the number sign # (ie. #kelownaParks). Information is then shared virally when followers re-tweet (RT) this information. Comments are directed at specific Twitter users (twits or tweeple) by including their @username in the tweet (ie. @cityofkelowna).

**Users:** Businesses, professionals

### City on Twitter:

Community & Media Relations maintains all corporate Twitter accounts.

[twitter.com/cityofkelowna](https://twitter.com/cityofkelowna)

[twitter.com/ylwkelowna](https://twitter.com/ylwkelowna)

The City of Kelowna uses Twitter to disseminate information quickly, promote City-sponsored events and programs and refer followers to content on kelowna.ca

### Twitter-specific Policies:

*Following policy:* In general we follow users that follow us. Accounts may also initiate following another twitter user based on business needs or relations (understanding that it is optimal to retain a higher follower/following ratio than visa versa). Spam or inappropriate followers will not be followed in return. City twitter accounts should follow each other.

*Direct Messaging (DM) Policy:* Twitter is intended to be a public forum. Use DM’s only when absolutely necessary (contain private information). It’s the City’s current practice not to send out a automatic DM when someone follows us.

*Re-tweet (RT) policy:* Re-tweets should be done in the spirit of sharing or conversation, without jamming the feed, and holding true to the posting guidelines found the Social Media Policy.

### Twitter specific best practices:

- avoid aggregated generic or ‘corporate-sounding’ tweets such as headlines of news releases. Use informal, spoken English.
- Frequency/timing: Twitter accounts should be used regularly (ie. at least once a day) to be viable. Time messages appropriately (after school hours, during lunch) and avoid flooding follows feeds by time separating back-to-back messages. (excluding @relies, or live coverage/crisis).
- Re-tweetable: make it easy for others to share our message. Keep posting short & sweet. Less than 120 characters is optimal as it allows space for ‘RT @cityofkelowna’ in the reply.
- Engaging: retweet other community events, government messages in order to maintain credibility and the spirit and intent of social media
- Linking: in the spirit of information sharing, lead readers to the source of extended information on the City’s website kelowna.ca
- Hash tags: use for live event coverage. Keep them short, sweet & memorable.

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<sup>1</sup> Online services such as bit.ly or owl.ly create shorter URLs for use on Twitter. This feature is often included in API programs such as TweetDeck or Hootsuite.

## **APPENDIX 2 – SOCIAL NETWORKS (FACEBOOK, LINKEDIN)**

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### **Facebook**

Facebook is one of the most popular social networking sites. There are three types of accounts: personal profiles, groups and fan pages. As a semi-private social media site, other users must request to become a “friend” to follow status updates on a personal profile. Facebook also has a variety of sharing features, including photos, videos, status updates, blogging sections, and thousands of third part applications. Businesses and governments are now using Facebook to network with users and promote activities, programs, projects and events.

### **City on Facebook:**

Community & Media Relations maintain two Facebook fan pages

Facebook.com/cityofkelowna

Facebook.com/ylwkelowna

### **Facebook-specific Policies:**

Type of 'pages'

The City will create 'pages' in Facebook not 'groups.' Facebook 'pages' offer distinct advantages including greater visibility, customization and measurability. For 'type' description, choose 'government.'

Boilerplate: Community & Media Relations will standardize and provide the Facebook page's image, consisting of a picture and/or the City's logo. Page names should be descriptive of the department/campaign - chosen carefully with consideration for abbreviations, slang iterations, etc. Community & Media Relations approve proposed names.

Boilerplate statement (as above): If comments are turned on, the Wall page should include a Comment Policy Box with the disclaimer & posting guidelines above.

### Comments and Discussion Boards

Comments to the Wall generally will be turned off but may be allowed on a case-by-case basis by request to Community & Media Relations. Discussion Boards should be turned off.

### Applications

There are thousands of Facebook applications. Common applications can allow users to stream video and music, post photos, and view and subscribe to RSS feeds. While some may be useful to the page's mission, they can cause clutter and security risks. An application should not be used unless it serves a business purpose, adds to the user experience, comes from a trusted source and is approved by the Web governance committee. An application may be removed at any time if there is significant reason to think it is causing a security breach or spreading viruses.

### **Facebook-specific best practices:**

- Link to the City: A link to kelowna.ca will be included on the Info page. All other City facebook pages should be fans of the Corporate Facebook page (and visa versa).
- Have each Facebook page load to the 'wall' to connect them to the freshest content.
- Page administrators: A successful page requires "babysitting." Each Facebook page must have a lead (and an alternate) responsible for making sure content is accurate and up-to-date.

### **LinkedIn**

A social networking site for businesses and professionals, LinkedIn is a highly private online network based on connections and introductions from colleagues and acquaintances. Great for business networking, LinkedIn is aimed specifically at the professional and could be used as a recruiting tool in the future. The site maintains and encourages strong ties between employees/colleagues and employers. At this time only a handful of City employees use LinkedIn and the City is represented by a collective of those identifying as City Employees. This page is not owned by the City (nor can it be) but could use cleaning up and bringing up to brand standards in the future.

### **APPENDIX 3 – PHOTOSHARING (FLICKR)**

With the City's limited budget for purchasing high quality images for City publications, photosharing sites like Flickr provide the City with the opportunity to utilize amateur photography at little to no cost.

Key to fostering this relationship is creating a strong online presence on Flickr that is based on social media principles of sharing and mutual interest. Thus the City may consider some incentives (prizes of camera equipment, tickets, invites, etc) for an online photo contest. Additionally, the City could also add value to this type of photo-sharing conversation by providing residents with 'behind the scenes' photos of city projects, timely news items or even emergency situations.

#### **Keep in mind:**

Photo releases: while there is already a generic disclaimer statement on the City's flickr site, photos of recognizable people – especially children – must have written permission attached to their use in public documents.

#### **The City on Flickr:**

At this time the City operates a Flickr account <http://www.flickr.com/groups/kelownacity/> The site is currently used inconsistently and could use bringing up to brand standards

#### **Flickr specific policies:**

- Have the most recent version of the City's photo release form available for download (pdf) or (if possible) linked online.
- Post a disclaimer about the City's comments and inappropriate content policy. Remove any inappropriate or un-related photos on Flickr.

## APPENDIX 4 – VIDEO

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The City of Kelowna provides access to online video because this is the way many residents communicate and obtain information online. Videos produced by or for the City should do one of the following, provide information about City services, showcase City and community events, and/or explore City issues. The City encourages the use of video content to further the goals of the City and the missions of its departments, where appropriate.

### Channels

**Okbc.tv** - Community & Media Relations has a contract with okbc.tv to produce short, web-ready vignettes at a reasonable rate. Videos produced through this company are posted on a feed at <http://www.cityofkelowna.okbc.tv/main.html> and linked through the video page on kelowna.ca.

**YouTube** - All videos produced for public consumption should be uploaded to the City's Youtube Channel. Unlike other channels, YouTube should be a library of all City Videos (no matter who produced them). Where appropriate, Youtube videos should be embedded within content pages of kelowna.ca.

### Youtube Best Practices:

When uploading a video to YouTube fully complete the title description tags and category fields in order to make the video search-optimized. Broadcasting options should be set to:

- Privacy - Share your video with the world (Recommended)
- Comments - Allow all comments with approval only
- Comment Voting - Don't allow comment voting
- Video Responses - Yes, allow responses after I approve them.
- Ratings - allow this video to be rated by others.
- Embedding - Yes, external sites may embed and play this video.
- Syndication - Yes, make this video available on mobile phones and TV.

Embedding a YouTube video:

- Upload the video to youtube as above
- Find the Embed link on the main video page.
- (uncheck) include related videos
- (check) show border
- (check) Enable privacy-enhanced mode
- Select the black and white colour scheme and the smallest frame size 425x324
- Copy the code provided and paste in to the back end of Active CM, changing the frame size to 300x200

## **APPENDIX 5 - BLOGGING**

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A blog (a contraction of the term "web log") is a website that allows users to reflect, share opinions, and discuss various topics in the form of an online journal while readers may comment on posts. Entries typically appear in reverse chronological order.

At this time, the City of Kelowna does not engage the public through a corporately branded public blog. As this may be a plausible tool in the future, the domain name *cityofkelowna* has been reserved at the popular web-based blogging site [blogger.com](http://blogger.com). This account may be used as an administrator of other blogs the city may be involved with or set up by consultants etc. (ie. Long term construction program or planning processes).

Please contact Community & Media Relations for permission to use this channel and gain access to it.

## **APPENDIX 6 - FORUMS**

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An **internet forum**, or **message board**, is an online discussion site which originated as the electronic equivalent of a traditional bulletin board. Web forums can take on many different forms, (public, and private, specific, or general) but are a basic form of Social Media as they foster discussion and shared information.

With millions of forums out there, the City can not be expected to monitor or engage in every forum in which the organization (or its associated staff or programs) are mentioned. Similar to writing a letter to the editor, it is important to remember that the public has right to air opinion and discuss public business. However, in instances of blatant misinformation, a posted response may be appropriate. Any response must be cleared with Community & Media Relations prior to posting and follow the rules of the Social Media Policy and Media Relations Policy (particularly sections relating to transparency, disclosure and subject matter expertise).