



Social Media Best Practices for Units

Digital tools including websites and social media pages can play a critical role for your unit's recruiting and promotional success. Today's on-the-go parents, business people and community leaders rely on tablets and smartphones to stay connected and organized. As a consequence, many units throughout the council use websites and social media to keep Scout parents up to date and to promote activities within their communities. The council website (www.pathwaytoadventure.org) and the webpages for your district should be considered the initial "go-to" sources for information. Social media can then point back to those sites as well as reach out to outside audiences. To help you develop the right tactics for your unit, we've put together these best practices and examples collected from fellow Scouters in our council. You can also reach out to the PTAC Social Media Committee at PtacSocialMedia@Gmail.com. Members are listed below. Another great resource is National BSA's Social Media Hub: <http://scoutingwire.org/marketing-and-membership-hub/social-media/>.

DO'S

- Consider building a simple website and/or one or more social media pages to keep you in closer touch with your Scout parents and adult alumni. Find someone within your unit who is "social-media savvy" to help.
- Facebook is the first choice for many units, however there are many other sites you might consider including Instagram, Google+, Pinterest and NextDoor, just to name a few.
- Make sure your unit's social media page is open to the general public. The BSA does not allow private pages or invite-only groups.
- Post positive stories about troop service projects, Eagle projects, campouts and other programs and events. Recognize the achievements of Scouters. Thank local businesses that donate their time or product, however small, such as sandwiches for a public service project.
- Educate your Scouting family about online privacy and not tagging others in online content without permission.
- Presume everything on the Internet is public and viewable by anyone, even if you don't think so. When in doubt, leave it out.
- Assign multiple administrators for any social media or website. Sites should continue to be operational even if the original creator has moved on. Make sure all administrators communicate with each other about content prior to posting.
- Establish rules for site offenders, including warnings for offenses and procedures for removing repeat offenders from the group.
- Use all communications tools that best fit your unit's "family" to keep everyone informed, including emails, handouts, text messages, social media, a website and the telephone. Often those "in the know" take it for granted that everyone knows about the unit's activities and values. Using a variety of communications tools makes it easier for everyone to stay in touch and "engaged."
- Always remember who the "consumers" of social media are and to take every precaution to ensure the safety and privacy of our youth by carefully considering what gets posted.

DON'TS

- It's a rare occurrence, however when a complaint is posted, do not hide or delete it. Provide a conscientious reply and try to resolve the issue offline. Don't engage in an online debate about a troop issue. It's prudent to allow others to see that when there is conflict, the unit is committed to a prompt resolution.
- Don't share sensitive BSA information to the outside online community.
- Never 'tag' or otherwise disclose the names of Scouts (or other children) in videos or photos without consent of their parent/guardian. Youth protection is a top priority.
- Offensive content such as racial, ethnic, sexual, religious, and physical disability slurs should never be tolerated and should be grounds for prompt removal from the site.
- Site administrators should retain the right and responsibility to edit or amend any misleading or inaccurate content depicted in posts. The administrators also have the right to delete posts violating any rules.
- Do not post personal information about any Scouts, parents, leaders or other BSA representatives.
- Do not post confidential or non-public BSA information.

Many units have set up websites, social media pages, or both. Here are several examples. Check them out to get ideas for your own activity.



Pack 28, Oak Park Facebook Page



Troop 16 Oak Park Website, <http://www.troop16oakpark.com/>



Troop 16 Oak Park Facebook Page



Troop 32 Arlington Heights Website, <http://www.troop32.info/>

PTAC SOCIAL MEDIA COMMITTEE (Send emails to PtacSocialMedia@Gmail.com) Tom Wetzel, Chairman, ASM, Troop 16 Oak Park, Collen Leahy, AMM, Troop 49, Lemont, Laurie Cowan, ASM, Troop 12, Western Springs, Jason Clary, Cubmaster, Pack 28, Oak Park, Christina Rivera, PTAC Pack 4439, St. Symphorosa, Chicago, Deb Keyes, Central Region Venturing Associate Advisor for Communications, Tim Stepp, Cubmaster, Pack 348, Palatine. Committee Member, Troop 182, Palatine, Jason Akai, Committee Chair, Pack 341, Oak Forest. Trish Miller, Committee Chair, Pack 48, Crown Point.