Town of Stratford

Social Media Strategy

Town of
Stratford
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Imagine that!

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1.0 Background

The Town of Stratford, as part of its recently developed Engagement Plan, is committed to increasing community engagement and communication among residents. In *Sustainable Stratford – Results Matter*, two of the 16 corporate strategic objectives are:

- To Increase Communications. Stratford will improve communications to and with residents and stakeholders and increase awareness of the community outside Stratford, and;

- To Increase Community Engagement. Stratford will engage significantly more residents and stakeholders in the decision-making process based on collaborative planning principles.

In response to these identified objectives, the following Positioning Statement has been developed for the Town of Stratford, and will serve to guide all Town communications:

> *Stratford, Prince Edward Island is a vibrant, growing, welcoming community where the best of PEI's land and water resources blend with a mix of urban and rural living to create the balanced lifestyle people are looking for and engaged residents actively share the responsibility of innovative governance with their elected officials [emphasis added].*

Additionally, three key messages were developed, at least one of which should be reflected in all information that is sent out from the Town. These messages are as follows:

- The Town of Stratford is building a better community where every person is respected and has the opportunity to reach their full potential. Imagine that!

- The Town of Stratford encourages all members of the community to share their views and ideas to help make Stratford the best possible place to live. Imagine that!

- The Town of Stratford is committed to building a strong local economy, preserving our heritage, celebrating our diverse culture and respecting the natural environment entrusted to us for present and future generations. Imagine that!

To that end, this Social Media Strategy will provide information, tools and technologies for the Staff and Council members who communicate with the public on behalf of the Town of Stratford, ensuring that they adhere to the key messages and positioning statement identified in Stratford's Engagement

Strategy, with the overall objective of increasing communications and community engagement.

2.0 Introduction: Social Media – What's in it for Local Government?

Used effectively, social media is an excellent tool for local government to use to communicate and engage with both the local and larger communities. Social media has and will continue to have a profound impact on increasing both collaboration with constituents and innovation in governance.

A strong social networking presence is the hallmark of an effective and transparent communications strategy. Social networking improves interactivity between a local government and the public, and it reaches residents who may not consume traditional media, or who may feel intimidated by participating traditionally in local governance.

This Social Media Strategy document provides social media guidelines to be followed by all parties who regularly communicate with the public on behalf of the Town of Stratford.

3.0 Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives of this Social Media Strategy are as follows:

1. To provide staff and council with the guidelines and policies that will help them to effectively increase communications and build community engagement via a variety of social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter;
2. To inform staff and council on the social media and communications tools available to them and identify how each will be utilized to accomplish the Town's engagement and communication goals;
3. To provide staff and council with the information and tools to enable them to develop effective, professional, uniform communications pieces across all mediums, and;
4. To provide the structure and tools to enable the staff and council to plan, coordinate, collaborate, strategize, and successfully monitor the success of social media and communications tools.

4.0 Strategy and Tools

The overarching goal of this Social Media Strategy is to increase communication and engagement with residents of Stratford by appropriately and effectively utilizing social media channels.

4.1 Overall Strategies

The most salient points of the social media strategy to be employed in order to engage the public across all platforms are as follows:

- make regular and consistently targeted posts to social media platforms to engage residents in online dialogue about community issues and goal

- ask questions and post polls on social media platforms

- identify conversations that are already happening on social media platforms around key issues and listen to what the public is saying

- use keywords in social media communication to enhance SEO (search engine optimization)

- provide resources to residents

- encourage residents to participate in the conversation and make them feel as though their input is valued

- create fresh, beneficial content that keeps residents engaged and promotes word of mouth through social media champions

- drive traffic back to the Town of Stratford's website

- encourage website visitors to engage with the Town on its social media platforms by posting social media "follow" buttons on the Town's website\

- Make use of images and videos as much as possible, and, wherever possible, include a relevant and engaging CTA (call to action)

4.2 Guidelines and Policies

Below are the general guidelines to follow when making social media posts, engaging in dialogue with the public and responding to questions, concerns and suggestions. Flexibility, adaptability, tact and wisdom are essential qualities to look for in those assigned with the task of managing social media content on behalf of the Town of Stratford as the appropriateness of a post will vary depending on the particular circumstances and situation.

<u>Purpose</u>

The Town of Stratford is using social media as a tool to engage with residents and spark dialogue. Managers should influence, and direct conversation tactfully, rather than attempting to control the conversation.

<u>Use</u>

The Town of Stratford's social media platforms are to be used solely to promote the goals outlined above. Under no circumstances are employees posting on behalf of the Town of Stratford to use the official Town of Stratford page to express their own personal views or voice grievances. Town employees should also be conscious of the fact that they are using social media to engage residents in dialogue on behalf of the Town. Spending work time engaging with friends, family and colleagues on personal social media accounts is not permitted.

<u>Language</u>

All social media posts done on behalf of the Town of Stratford should use correct spelling and grammar. Slang and inappropriate/offensive language should never be used.

<u>Tone</u>

In general, the tone used in social media is more conversational and less formal. Since all employees posting on the Town of Stratford's social media platforms are posting on behalf of the Town, posts should strike a balance between being professional, polite and helpful and being friendly, engaging and human. It is important to always respond politely and to remain positive no matter what tone whoever is engaging with you is using. Employees should maintain a polite tone no matter what the circumstances.

<u>Posting Frequency</u>

There is only one thing worse than not posting frequently enough, and that is posting (on any platform) too often. Information inundation is one of the reasons most frequently given by individuals for unfollowing a brand or company's social media platform. Identify the key times of day when your target audiences are most active on the platforms you are posting to and plan your posts strategically. Two (or maximum three) posts a day is an appropriate number for Facebook (posts made early in the morning, during lunch and late at night get the best engagement). The Twitter feed moves more quickly so you can post to this platform more regularly throughout the day (you will get better engagement during business hours unless you are engaging with diners who tend to tweet food photographs and restaurant reviews in the evenings and late at night).

Focus

Focus on original content (photographs, videos, articles, infographics, checklists, tutorials, etc.), and balance posts that are promoting Town of Stratford events/information/website traffic with posts whose main purpose is to ask questions, gather information, gain insights, and generate dialogue. Social media is more of a listening and engagement tool than it is a projection tool. Focus on the interests, needs and ideas of your target audience, not solely on promoting your own messages and itinerary.

Correcting Mistakes

Everything posted on social media platforms has the potential to go viral very quickly. This has its advantages and disadvantages. Make sure to double-check your posts, links, and hash tags (#) before you hit enter. And make sure that you have permission to use any images you post. If you do make a mistake, do not try to cover it up. If the post is a text only post on Facebook go in and either delete it and re-post (if it has not yet had any engagement) or (if it has already had engagement and you would therefore be deleting someone's comment) simply correct your mistake in the comments section below the post. If it is an image post you can easily click on the photo and then edit the text attached to it. Tweets spread quickly across the social network, so the sooner you catch it the better. Go into your Tweets, delete the Tweet that contains the mistake, and create a new Tweet with the correct information.

Dealing with Complaints/Negative Comments

Negative comments and complaints go viral on social media platforms faster than positive comments. Unless a post is using vulgar language or being outright abusive or inappropriate, do not ever delete a comment. Negative comments and complaints should be dealt with promptly and politely. Be clear and respectful, let them know that their comment has been heard, and if possible tell them how their concern is being dealt with and what steps they can take if they want to pursue the issue further. The people with the most grievous complaints can often turn into an organization's most staunch supporters and advocates if treated with respect.

4.3 Social Media Engagement Tools and Individual Platform Engagement Strategy

Engagement Tools:

Facebook

Facebook is the largest social media platform, currently with over 1 billion monthly (618 million daily) active users. As such it is an excellent initial platform

for the Town of Stratford to use to connect with its target audience simply by virtue of the number of users.

Facebook posts should have specific goals (i.e. driving traffic to the official website, getting people to share post with their friends to spread the word about an issue or upcoming event, etc.) and should be accompanied by a clear Call To Action (CTA) so that followers know exactly what you want them to do (share with friends; leave a comment, etc.).

The Town of Stratford's Facebook posts should be doing one of the following:

1. Sharing information about main Town issues/concerns/upcoming events
2. Asking questions that engage residents in dialogue (or collecting feedback via polls), gather ideas/suggestions and build an ongoing dialogue between the Town and residents
3. Educating residents on issues of interest/concern to residents
4. Inspiring residents to contribute to their community and reflect on the values that they hold as important and how they can put these values into action
5. Driving traffic to the Town of Stratford's website/engagement tool

Before hitting enter, ask yourself:

1. Is the post visually interesting? Incorporate photographs or videos as often as possible. Posts that use photographs to illustrate a point get a much higher engagement rate than those that do not
2. Is the post entertaining? Use of appropriate and purposeful humour is a great way to get people engaged with an issue and share their thoughts/ideas
3. Is the post going to be of value to our target audience? Not every post needs to target the same demographic within your target audience, but every post needs to be of interest to at least ONE of your target demographics
4. What action do we want people to take after reading with this post?
5. Is there a clear Call To Action (CTA) in words or images? (Remember that the cover image can now include a CTA as long as the text does not cover more than 20% of the image)
6. If you want to drive traffic back to your website, have you embedded the URL in your post?

Facebook is a relationship-building tool. Building engagement on Facebook takes time. It will not happen overnight. Take time to look at how your posts are performing and whether they are achieving your goals. Over time you will be able to identify the types of posts that resonate with your audience/s, and can create more of these.

<u>Twitter</u>

The impact and benefits of **Twitter** are not to be overlooked. Twitter is a "Micro-blogging" tool, and has a very important role in crisis management, marketing promotions, and as a customer/resident service forum. The main, daily value of Twitter is as a listening and conversation tool. As such, one of Twitter's most powerful features is its search tool, which enables users to search for conversations that are already happening around a particular topic or event and then engage with those who are having the conversations.

The Town of Stratford's Twitter feed has the following goals:

1. To announce upcoming events and programs and to share press releases and blog entries
2. To listen for conversations that are already happening around the subjects that are a priority for the town (using the search tool)
3. To engage in dialogue with the public about the local economy, culture, heritage, diversity and the environment
4. To receive and respond to questions from the public in a timely fashion
5. To drive traffic to the Town of Stratford's website and blog

Twitter posts are 140 characters or less and key words should have a hash tag (#) in front of them so that they are grouped with all other tweets that use the same key word. Any links included in a tweet, unless they are the official website of the Town of Stratford, should be shortened using a service like bitly.com

Before tweeting, making sure that your post:

1. Is correct. Make sure that any times or dates are correct before posting a tweet because it will be retweeted over and over, and before you know it thousands of people could potentially have the wrong information
2. Is engaging. Use humour, video or images and don't forget to ask questions (this is not a projection tool). Keep in mind that both YouTube videos and photos that you upload will be visible in the Twitter feed. Instagram photos are currently not visible in the newsfeed – users will have to click on a link that will take them out of Twitter in order to see the image
3. Has a Call to Action (CTA). "Retweet if you agree with this statement" or "Retweet if you will be at our event this evening" are two examples
4. Is respectful. Do not be disrespectful on Twitter—it will come back to haunt you when the person you are addressing shares your tweet with their entire network
5. Is relevant. Don't tweet just for the sake of tweeting. Have a goal and make sure that every post is leading you closer to accomplishing that goal
6. Is timely. If someone asks you about things to do in the Town of Stratford and you respond a week later they have probably already gotten an

answer to their question elsewhere, and may not even be on Prince Edward Island anymore. Make sure that you check your Twitter feed daily, and respond to questions within 24 hours of receiving them

7. Uses correct English spelling and grammar. Yes, tweets are short, but that does not mean they have to be badly written. Replacing "and" with "&" is one thing. Replacing "you too" with "u2" is another thing altogether

8. Uses relevant hash tags (#), especially if the Town is running a campaign. Make sure that you create unique hash tags so that you can locate all tweets associated with a particular campaign for tracking and analytics purposes

9. Keep in mind that you are tweeting on behalf of the Town of Stratford. Posts should reflect the official perspective of the Town and not the personal opinions of individual employees

Don't forget to upload a background image. Your background image can include a CTA on it (including the Town's website/contact information), a header image and a profile image. The Town's Twitter feed can be integrated into the Town of Stratford's webpage. This has two functions: it lets people know what is happening in real time, and it tells everyone who visits the website that the Town of Stratford is on Twitter.

Blog and/or Online Forum

The keys to a successful **blog** are a great strategy, engaging content, great writing, and getting actively engaged in the larger 'blogosphere'. Stratford will need to research current blog leaders in topics that are of interest to the Town's target audience, and begin to share content from these other bloggers on Stratford's social media platforms as well as its own content. Promoting a leading blog and adding it to your RSS Feed/Blogroll will help to attract followers who are following other similar or related blogs. Very few other municipalities maintain blogs, so Stratford has an opportunity to be on the leading edge.

The use of a Blog or other online forum is a more structured way to present detailed content and information to residents. Blogs are a great way to "spark" a conversation about a controversial issue, or to highlight the Town's initiatives in a more in-depth manner. Blog visitors may have an initial engagement with the Town on Facebook, Twitter or YouTube, and then be driven to the blog for further engagement. It is important to recognize that visitors who visit a blog have usually already engaged with the organization or writer on another platform and are arriving with a greater degree of trust and commitment than someone with no background on the subject being discussed. Because of this the Town will want to be strategic about the blog landing page and make sure that it has a "subscribe" button where visitors can opt-in to receive blog posts delivered directly into their email inbox.

To improve social sharing of blog posts every post should have social sharing/proof buttons that both enable readers to share a post that resonates with them and displays the number of times each post has been shared on various platforms (known as social proof). The higher the number of social shares displayed on the blog page, the more people will be inclined to share it with their networks.

Managers will identify specific topics/themes for each post and create a monthly editorial calendar. Bloggers will need to prepare blog posts far enough in advance that there is time for thorough editing, and a specific person needs to be assigned with the responsibility of checking to see whether people have commented on posts and responding to these responses in a timely manner. YouTube videos and photographs can be easily embedded in blog posts to make them more visually interesting.

Caution: Posts must be carefully written to appropriately reflect the perspective(s) of the Town of Stratford rather than the individual opinions of employees.

Online Video (YouTube)

YouTube is the second largest search engine after Google. This is not surprising, given the fact that many Internet users prefer to view – rather than read – information.

YouTube has a number of powerful benefits for local government. It's free, and it meets the needs of hurried Internet users (many of whom prefer to watch videos as opposed to read information). Additionally, a YouTube video has the potential to go viral, which would mean that potentially thousands of people could be viewing and sharing your video.

YouTube videos should be scripted ahead of time, and professionally made and edited. All official Town of Stratford videos should be branded, and once uploaded, should be search engine optimized (Title, Description, Tags and Transcript). Unless the video has a specific purpose (like outlining a development or public works project) that requires a lengthy description, videos should be kept as short as possible (2-5 minutes) to increase the number of people who watch the whole video and reach the Call to Action (CTA) at the end.

Much like content uploaded to other social media platforms, videos should have a specific goal and should end with a Call to Action (CTA) to get viewers from the video back to the Town of Stratford's website, blog, or on to another video. Those managing the content on this platform need to keep in mind that those coming to the website from YouTube will already have a significant amount of background information on the topic covered in the video and are arriving on the website ready to take the next step. Give them what they are looking for by

making sure that you send them to a landing page that either collects their contact information or outlines specific steps that they can take to get more involved or share their opinions.

The Town of Stratford's YouTube videos should:

1. Be informative
2. Be engaging
3. Incorporate humour
4. Be colourful
5. Incorporate age/demographic/subject-appropriate music
6. Begin with a playful, provocative or mysterious tone to make viewers curious to keep watching to find out more
7. End with a clear CTA

Some ideas of things that can be shared on YouTube are: videos that address environmental issues, ways Stratford is preserving its natural resources (like rain barrels); educational videos that teach residents about the diversity of ecosystems in Stratford (marsh, coastal areas, etc.); traffic safety videos; healthy lifestyle videos (highlighting the gym, parks, etc.), Camp Gencheff videos; videos that highlight Stratford's diversity or history; sense of place videos that capture Stratford through the different seasons; local festivals, and videos created by youth in the community.

Photo Sharing (Flickr and Pinterest)

Flickr

Flickr is an online image and video hosting site. As well as being the number one used and searched site for images, the platform is very popular for users to host and embed photos that are shared on their websites and blogs. Easily integrated with other platforms, Flickr images can be shown in Facebook, shared in Twitter and embedded in a website, blog and/or online forum.

One of the key benefits of marketing with Flickr is that the site has a large amount of credibility (and therefore online visibility) among all search engines, including Google.

Images uploaded to Flickr should be original images that the Town of Stratford has been authorized to use and share publicly. The Town can control how images in their albums can be used and shared, can encourage visitors to share their images across social media platforms, and can encourage members of the community to share images with them that the Town can upload to its Flickr site (with the understanding that the images will be shared in this way).

All images uploaded by the Town of Stratford should reinforce the Town's main goals and be used to target one or more of the Town's demographics.

Some ideas of things that the Town could highlight with images on Flickr are: public art programs and examples of what arts and culture can do in the community; youth events; infrastructure improvement images (before, during and after shots), and public events.

<u>Pinterest</u>

Pinterest in an online gallery of themed pin boards that display images and videos with backlinks to websites/video channels and/or blog posts. Pinterest is currently the number one traffic driving social media platform and as such has an important role to play in driving specific kinds of targeted traffic to the Town of Stratford's website, blog and/or YouTube channel.

Pinterest is currently used predominantly by women (80%), 50% of whom have children. This makes it an excellent platform to present children's and youth activities and educational materials on, as well as to engage young parents.

The most effective things to pin to Pinterest boards are:

1. Original images and videos
2. Infographics
3. Checklists/to-do lists
4. Tutorials
5. Links to downloadable articles/blogs/educational materials
6. Tall pins
7. SlideShare presentations

The Town of Stratford's Pins and Boards should:

1. Be SEO optimized (Titles, descriptions, etc.)
2. Use appropriate content directly related to one or more of the Town's priority areas (environment, culture, heritage, diversity or economy)
3. Link back to the Town of Stratford's website/blog/YouTube channel
4. Include CTAs in their descriptions
5. As much as possible, be original content
6. As much as possible, use branded images/videos

Some ideas of things the Town of Stratford could share on Pinterest are: arts and culture images, images of the Town's Youth and Family programs, activity ideas for parents with young children, culinary events/festivals and healthy eating recipes.

<u>Presentation Sharing Software (SlideShare)</u>

SlideShare regularly attracts around 12 million visitors every month. The platform enables users to upload slides from presentations on a wide-range of business and/or community-related topics and get feedback from other users. SlideShare is a great way to increase transparency and engagement among residents. SlideShare presentations can be embedded into blog posts and the Town of Stratford's website, as well as being shared on Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest. Visitors who watch a slideshow can also share the show on their social media platforms, thus spreading the message much further than if the Town of Stratford were doing all of the promoting.

SlideShare presentations uploaded to the Town of Stratford's page should accomplish one of the following:

1. Inform the public about one of the Town's main priorities: economy, heritage, culture, diversity or the environment
2. Inform the public about one of the Town's main projects and its goals
3. Drive traffic to a contact information collection page on the Town of Stratford's website
4. Drive traffic to the Town of Stratford's blog, where they can engage more deeply in discussion about a particular topic
5. Educate the public about issues that are important to the community
6. Get community members actively involved in their community through a variety of projects/programs

Every SlideShare presentation should:

1. Incorporate eye-catching, original images
2. Be original work
3. Incorporate the Town of Stratford's brand throughout
4. Incorporate at least some humour if possible
5. End with a Call to Action (CTA) which drives viewers to take another step after watching the show

5.0 Tactical Plan

The Town of Stratford's social media strategy will be implemented in 3 phases.

<u>Phase 1: Building Awareness</u>

Phase 1 will focus on **building awareness** about the Town's desire to engage with residents, what it would like to engage with residents about, and the various channels through which this engagement can take place. Awareness and engagement will be built by driving traffic to landing pages on the Town's website

where further engagement is taking place, and increasing engagement and communications with residents on both Facebook and Twitter.

Facebook

Staff in charge of managing the Town of Stratford's social media content will spend 30 minutes every day on Facebook. 1/3 of this time will be spent posting relevant content to the Town of Stratford's Facebook page and the remaining 2/3 of the time spent on this platform will be used to engage with residents by asking questions, answering questions and responding to concerns/suggestions. Wherever possible, every post will include an image/video and a Call to Action (CTA). Comments/questions that do not fall within the expertise of whoever is managing the Facebook platform will be referred to a staff specialist who can provide a competent and professional response. Questions/comments directed at the Town of Stratford will be responded to within 24 hours.

Short-term objectives (over the next year) will be:

- Increasing the number of **engaged** Facebook page followers by 50/month
- Increasing the number "talking about" the Town of Stratford's page to a minimum of 30 on a regular day, higher during festivals, promotions or holidays
- Increasing the amount of post engagement steadily every month
- Steadily increasing monthly "reach" (see insights)
- Increasing engagement across main target demographics
- Increasing the number of visitors to the website/blog from the Facebook page

Twitter

Staff in charge of managing the Town of Stratford's social media content will spend a minimum of 30 minutes and a maximum of 60 minutes engaging residents on Twitter every day. 1/4 of this time will be spent posting links to information about upcoming events, articles, etc., and the remainder of the time will be spent asking questions, searching keywords for ongoing conversations and actively engaging in dialogue with residents of the Town of Stratford. Comments/questions that do not fall within the expertise of whoever is managing Twitter posts and engagement will be referred to a staff specialist who can provide a competent and professional response. Questions/comments directed at the Town of Stratford will be responded to within 24 hours.

Short-term objectives (over the next year) will be:

- Increasing the number of followers by 50/month
- Seeing a consistent increase in the number of Retweets, favourites and replies

- Increasing the ratio of conversation to projection so that most of what is happening on Twitter is conversation and not just one-way communications
- Taking the time to identify a list of key words, searching for them daily and engaging in conversation with residents about these key issues
- Making sure that tweets make regular use of images and links to engage people and drive traffic to the website
- Increasing the amount of website/blog traffic arriving via Twitter
- Monitoring the reach of tweets
- Taking note of the most influential connections on Twitter and nurturing these to increase the reach of the Town of Stratford's tweets

Phase 2: Building Engagement by Introducing a Blog/Online Forum

In this Phase, the Town of Stratford should consider developing a blog or online forum to increase engagement with the public. Blog posts will be updated weekly following a pre-defined theme. It would be ideal, for example, if each week one of four identified monthly communications priorities (as per the Editorial calendar for that month) were explored in the blog. Another idea is to "borrow" blog posts from other places (such as the Youth Can Do blog) and re-publish them on the Town's Blog. Community members can also be invited to be guest bloggers to help create interesting blog content that reinforces the Town of Stratford's goals. The Town's blog/forum should be monitored on daily basis for comments by residents and others. Every time a post is published the communications team will share it across the Town's various social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)

The three most important features of a blog are an interesting topic, good, quality writing, and consistency of post. The blog entries need to be focusing on a subject that is engaging and of interest to one or more of the Town of Stratford's target audience. Topics should be planned ahead of time and whoever is writing the post should have time to research (if necessary), write, receive feedback and edit the post before it is published. It does not really matter how often a blog post is published. What does matter is that posts are published on the same schedule every week/month so that readers know when to expect the next post and it becomes part of their regular reading pattern. Depending on the subject of the blog post and the expertise of the blogger, posts can take anywhere from an hour to three or four hours to write. Creating backlinks for keywords, businesses mentioned in posts and community events will help with search engine optimization (SEO).

Short-term objectives (over the next year) will be:

- To increase communication/engagement among Stratford area residents (and others outside of the Town of Stratford) by posting pieces following a pre-defined theme
- To establish a regular blog publication schedule (add to editorial calendar)
- To encourage comments
- To increase readership and blog subscribers
- To build traffic coming from Blog to Town of Stratford's website
- To improve SEO for the Town of Stratford's website

Phase 3: Empowering Engaged Residents to Become Community Influencers through the Introduction of Videos, Presentations & Photographs □

In Phase 3 the Town of Stratford will begin sharing videos, presentations and photographs that residents can share with their networks to help engage larger numbers of people. The platforms that the Town of Stratford will use to develop videos, presentations and photographs are YouTube, SlideShare and Flickr.

Introduce YouTube

The Town of Stratford will re-brand its YouTube channel, identify the messages that it wants to be getting out to residents and the actions that it would like residents to take after watching the videos it is producing and sharing across social media platforms. It will then hire a video production team to film and edit the videos. Once complete, videos will be uploaded to the Town of Stratford's channel and fully optimized before being shared on Facebook or Twitter. Videos should be uploaded on a consistent schedule (weekly or monthly) and then shared multiple times across social media platforms to promote them. The Town's YouTube channel should be checked regularly for comments and shares. Apart from uploading time, 15 minutes should be spent sharing and responding to any comments on YouTube videos daily.

Short-term objectives:

- To identify the primary goals in creating YouTube videos and the desired outcome from sharing these videos with residents
- To script videos that are engaging and informative
- To identify and begin working with a qualified film/editing team
- To create a series of videos that highlight Stratford's culture, environment, economy and diversity
- To upload and optimize branded videos to the Town of Stratford's YouTube channel
- To include CTAs to encourage residents to comment on and share videos with their social networks
- To increase the number of people viewing and sharing the Town of Stratford's videos

- To increase visits to the Town of Stratford's website via the YouTube channel

<u>Introduce Flickr</u>

If it decides to go with this platform, the Town of Stratford will establish an official Flickr account and create themed albums. Residents that are on Flickr will be invited to share their images of their community in group albums and other albums will be created that highlight photographs taken by the Town of Stratford. A total of 10 minutes a day will be spent on this platform by whoever is managing it and curating the images displayed on it. Visitors will be encouraged to comment and share images via their own social media platforms.

Short-term objectives:
- To engage residents and others with images that highlight the culture, economy, heritage, diversity and natural environment in the Town of Stratford
- To encourage residents to share their photographs of things that they value about their community
- To build and maintain a publicly-accessible, dynamic and regularly-updated photo bank
- To document events happening in the Town of Stratford
- To attract and encourage newcomers to consider relocating to Stratford
- To increase the number of people sharing images of Stratford with their social networks
- To increase dialogue about Stratford based on images of the Town

<u>Introduce SlideShare</u>

SlideShare will be used to share presentations put together by the Town of Stratford with residents. This format is conducive both to easy access for residents who are actively seeking information about a particular issue, and to sharing this content with their extended networks. Whenever a presentation is uploaded it should be shared on both Facebook and Twitter a number of times (at different times of day). Presentations can also be embedded in both the Town's website and the blog/engagement tool to help residents make informed comments and suggestions. Whoever is managing the Town's SlideShare presence should visit the page regularly to respond to comments and keep abreast of who is sharing presentations, which presentations are most popular, how often they are being shared and on which platforms.

Short-term objectives:

- Create SlideShare presentations about each public Town presentation so that the ideas can easily be shared with and accessed by those who were not able to attend the presentations

- Regularly share SlideShare presentations on Facebook and Twitter with a clear CTA to get residents engaged with the topic being addressed
- Encourage those who watch a SlideShare presentation to share it with their social media networks
- Invite feedback in the form of comments either on the SlideShare page or on the Town of Stratford's public engagement tool
- Drive traffic to the Town of Stratford's website
- Provide a model for other towns embracing social media as a means of better connecting with their residents

6.0 Social Media Measurement Tools and Suggested Frequency

Success in using social media tools to develop and strengthen relationships is dependent upon having specific goals and then regularly monitoring progress and taking the time to reflect as a team. Key metrics that will be monitored for each platform will be established (see below) and at the end of the month the communications team will review progress on each platform, make adjustments based on what worked or did not work over the course of the month, and set new goals for the following month. At the end of the year a final report will be prepared providing an overview of the progress that has been made towards accomplishing the Town of Stratford's communication goals using social media tools.

Below are the key monitoring tools, metrics to be monitored and guidelines for each of the platforms that will be utilized by the Town of Stratford:

1. Facebook

Suggested monitoring tool: Facebook Analytics complemented by either a monitoring and analytics tool like Hootsuite or SproutSocial.

Suggested frequency: The following should be monitored daily, weekly & monthly:

- Number of page followers
- Number & type of posts (photographs, plain text, videos, etc.)
- Amount & type of engagement that each post gets (Likes, Comments or Shares)
- Main demographics engaging with the Town's page (age, location & sex)
- Fluctuations in the number of page "likes" & "unlikes"
- Influencers (people who share & comment regularly with a large following
- Individual post reach (total number of people a post has reached)
- Traffic arriving on the Town of Stratford's website via Facebook (track using Google Analytics)
- Most popular posts

Daily numbers should be compiled at the end of the week. At the end of the month one of the staff members should prepare a monthly report (preferably in the form of an Excel spreadsheet) that can be reviewed and assessed when the communications team meets. Every four months a report should be prepared that provides an overview for progress over the previous four months.

2. Twitter

Suggested monitoring tools: Twitter's search tool and Hootsuite or SproutSocial.

Twitter's search tool should be used on a daily basis. The Town of Stratford should make a list of key words such as "Town of Stratford," "Stratford PEI," "Stratford culture," "youth activities Stratford PEI," etc. and conduct a daily search for each keyword/phrase. When conversations are found that are connected to Town issues the Town should engage in dialogue with residents to build stronger relationships with them. Searching in this way is both a monitoring tool as well as an engagement tool as relevant conversations will often go unseen (and therefore unaccounted for in monitoring efforts) unless searched for in this way.

Suggested frequency: The following should be monitored daily, weekly & monthly:

- Number of followers
- Number of Tweets sent out & received
- % of Tweets that are conversational vs. % that are simply announcing upcoming events or making statements
- Number of Retweets
- Number of social influencers who are following the Town of Stratford
- Number of mentions
- Number of responses to Tweets the Town has sent out
- Number of link clicks (and number of people arriving on the Town's website via Twitter)
- Keywords/phrases that mention the Town of Stratford
- Demographics of those engaging in dialogue with the Town of Stratford
- Location of those engaging in dialogue with the Town of Stratford (Stratford residents, PEI residents, NB/NS residents, etc.).

At the end of the month a report should be prepared in the form of an Excel spreadsheet that compiles the engagement metrics from the previous month into a single chart/table so that the communications team can easily review progress and create a comprehensive plan for the following month.

3. Blog

Suggested monitoring tools: Most blogs have their own internal monitoring tools that provide quite detailed analytics about the number of visitors, geographic location of visitors, amount of time they spent on the blog, most popular blog posts, etc.

The following should be monitored on a daily basis:

- Comments/questions
- Social shares

The following should be monitored on a monthly basis:

- Number of posts
- Audience growth
- Growth in the number of blog subscribers
- Keywords that people are searching for that are bringing them to the Town of Stratford's Blog
- Growth in traffic arriving on the Town of Stratford's website via the blog
- Number of quality comments being left in response to blog posts
- Geographic location of visitors to blog
- If available, age demographic of visitors to blog
- Most popular posts
- Whether people read more than one blog post when they visit blog
- Social sharing (how many people are sharing the blog post on Facebook? How many are sharing it on Twitter? How many are pinning it on their Pinterest boards?)

4. YouTube

Suggested monitoring tools: YouTube has an excellent, built in analytics tool that will be perfect for monitoring engagement with the Town of Stratford's videos.

The following should be monitored on a daily basis:

- Comments
- Social shares (Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, etc.)
- New subscriptions
- Total number of views

The following should be monitored on a monthly basis:

- Comments
- Social shares (Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, etc.)

- Total number who have subscribed to the YouTube channel
- Total number of views
- Most popular videos (most viewed)
- Keywords being searched that are driving traffic to the YouTube channel
- Number of people who have watched a video and have taken the next step at the end of the video (the CTA)
- YouTube channel traffic source (referrals)
- Number of visitors to the official Town of Stratford website coming from YouTube

5. Flickr

Suggested monitoring tools: Built in analytic tool ($24.95/year professional membership)

The following should be monitored daily:

- Overall engagement with images: likes, social shares and comments
- New uploads by others to group albums

The following should be monitored monthly:

- Audience growth: unique and return visitors
- Reach
- Traffic coming to official Town of Stratford website via Flickr
- Improvement in SEO based on images and keywords associated with them
- Engagement with images (comments, social shares, etc.)
- Number of images uploaded/number of albums created
- Most popular albums
- In the case of group albums, number of contributors and number of images contributed

6. SlideShare

Suggested monitoring tools: Built in analytic tool with professional membership

Suggested frequency: The following should be monitored on a daily basis:

- Comments
- Social shares (Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, LinkedIn)
- Downloads

The following should be monitored on a monthly basis:

- Number of views per presentation
- Number of comments
- Number of social shares
- Number of referrals
- Traffic arriving on the official Town of Stratford webpage via SlideShare
- Number of downloads

7.0 Creating a Social Media Communications Plan

It is imperative that every Social Media Strategy be implemented by creating a Social Media Communications and/or Marketing Plan. The Town's overall goal is to increase community engagement. The plan needs to identify upcoming events, workshops, activities, education materials and ways potential monthly or quarterly "themes" around which posts will be created. Posts that are announcing upcoming events can be easily scheduled ahead of time, but other posts are going to be more spontaneous, influenced by current events, issues, or concerns, the season or weather, and initiatives that residents initiate themselves. Below is a list of the steps that need to be taken to create a successful social media plan:

1. Create an editorial calendar that is shared among the communications team members
2. Add all events for the year that already have dates to the calendar
3. Look at the Town of Stratford's goals and decide how posts are going to address these goals. One possible model would be dividing the year up into three-month blocks, and having each block focus on one particular issue (like environment or culture). Another model might be that every week there will be three cultural-related posts, two environmental, 2 diversity-related posts and three posts that refer to the economy (in addition to any posts about upcoming events)
4. Create a grab list of post-ideas and content (images, videos, quotes, etc) so that there is always a source to tap when team members are not sure what to post.
5. Divide up the posts so that everyone knows what they are responsible for. Make sure that posts are spread out so that a whole bunch of posts are not published at the same time, which would only inundate your followers
6. Make sure that there is at least one employee with access to a mobile device at all community events who can photograph the event and live-tweet from it
7. Identify one or two people who are responsible for checking on comments and questions posted by residents on any of the platforms, and either responding to them or contacting someone who can respond to the question and making sure that the resident received a response in a timely manner
8. Identify who is going to collect statistics from each platform and compile them into monthly progress reports

9. Establish a clear protocol for how the communications team is going to deal with and respond to complaints or problems
10. Schedule monthly reflection gatherings for the communications team to go over the previous month's progress report and make a plan for the following month

Other ideas: Social media highlights can also be compiled and published in the Town of Stratford's newsletter.

8.0 Conclusion

By employing the tools and techniques outlined in this Social Media Strategy (and its companion Communications Guide and Engagement Guide), the Town of Stratford will be well situated to increase and improve its communication with and engagement among residents and other key stakeholders. It is important to remember that building relationships and improving engagement with residents of the Town of Stratford using social media tools is going to take time. As the communications team members implement the social media strategy and create a plan they will learn what works best for them and will become experts in how to best engage their community using social media tools. This will be an ongoing process involving careful planning and monitoring to ensure goals are met.