

Jan & Julie's Top Ten Tips: How to Keep your Social Media Social

1. Own it

Having a social media site is like opening a new customer service window at your front counter. It is open 24 hours a day – you need to staff it!

2. Have a game plan

What will you post, who will post it, who will monitor for comments and questions?

3. Share your ground rules

Manage expectations – post your rules for how to engage on Facebook on your Our Story and the About section – or when things get rough, pin them to the top of your page. Post your hours. You can also set up auto-reply. Tell followers you are "logging off for the day, and we'll be happy to answer your questions in the morning."

4. Be friendly (:

Use a friendly tone – think coffee shop conversation. Drop the formal language "Please be advised..." and try a more conversational tone "Hey folks! We're paving Main Street this week. Watch for our flag people who will get you through the construction zone as safely – and as quickly as possible. Thank you for your patience as we work on making Main Street safer and smoother."

5. Make it visual

Ensure your post is noticed by including links, pictures and videos to real people in your team or in your community (avoid stock photos). This is a proven to get way more engagement and help strengthen relationships with your community.

6. Inspect what you expect

Listen to what folks are saying on your social – and theirs. Be sure to correct the incorrect with a post on your site – and theirs if appropriate.

7. It's a 'Spectator Sport' (Jay Baer, Author of Hug your Haters)

Respond publicly. You're not just responding to one but to many in a few short keystrokes. Show your empathy, concern and address the facts.

8. Limit your responses

Answer the question, provide a link to more information or offer to provide more follow up in person by offering your email and or phone. Don't engage with the trolls. It is easy to get pulled into bickering.

9. Speak for yourself

Only post what you know to be true and you can respond to if needed. Be careful what you share.

10. Post just for fun (:

It's ok to just post for fun. There are human beings behind the communications, the plow trucks, the utility bills and the lawn mowers so be human. "It's Spring! Here is John tending to our gorgeous daffodills. What do you have blooming in your garden?"

11. (Bonus Tip!) Breathe!

When things get nasty, back away from your keyboard. Take breath and even sleep on it. Take time to draft a careful, positive response and then share it with a friend for a new perspective.

If you need to phone a friend:

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