



Social Media Best Practices for Journalists

The core of our business is delivering news, information and advertising to readers. In the digital era, Facebook, Twitter and other social media give us new tools to deliver our valuable content by engaging new readers in new ways. Social media also provide us important new ways to gather information and report stories. These methods of communication are no longer add-ons to traditional journalism. They are essential tools for delivering and obtaining content.

Journalists at BCI should keep in mind the following best practices when using social media platforms.

- Social media is a great way to break information but don't forget journalistic ethics and integrity. Do not post embargoed information as it may alienate sources and do not post names, ages or addresses of victims until they are officially released.
- Breaking news and information should be posted as soon as it can be confirmed, and updated regularly and consistently. For instance, we should not post about a road closure and then fail to post again when the road is opened.
- Whenever possible, information posted during breaking news events should be attributed.
- Social media is not social if you only have outbound communication. Instead of simply posting links to content, try to engage readers while posting those links. As an example, ask readers how they feel about a topic while including the link for them to view our coverage about it. Or, if there is broader news like fires, floods or road closures, ask if and how they were impacted along with those links. This invites two-way communication that engages our audience, may add new information to stories or provide sources for follow up articles.
- Try to engage readers about a topic before and after publication. Feedback from users before publication may help shape our coverage and create reader anticipation for the content. Following up after publication promotes the final result and brings people back to the website.
- When possible, include appropriate urls, @names and #hashtags. This helps your post reach a broader audience and increases the likelihood others will re-post or retweet it. A twitter example is below.
 - Instead of: Gwen Lachelt says Swift energy transparent about new oil well in this Chuck Slothower story - <http://bit.ly/1h5hNLZ>
 - Post something similar to: @GWENLACHELT says @swift_energy transparent about new #oilandgas drilling in @chuckslothower story - <http://bit.ly/1h5hNLZ>
- Use the strengths of the chosen social media platform. Facebook can have associated photo galleries, Twitter has robust linking ability through use of @names and #hashtags and Tout is best for sharing video. Once size does not fit all in the social media-shere.
- Link accounts when appropriate to maximize efforts. It may make sense to link Tout and Twitter accounts, so that every video on Tout is shared via Twitter. This leverages your existing Twitter audience (likely larger than Tout) but brings the video benefits Tout has to offer. Linking Twitter to LinkedIn or Facebook may not be a good idea if you have a different use or following on those platforms for example.