

Social Media in the public sector

Social media has changed the way information is distributed in the public. At present, it is undeniably the most influential platform that everyone can use freely to inform and to engage.

The government is Australia's largest sector. The sector, along with its various communication channels, aims to provide the public with updates and latest information on the government, the industries under it, policy updates and objectives, and an open platform that the general public can reach to, whenever needed

Social media has greatly shaped the way the public sector engaged with the public. An innovative game-changer, the public, through the platform, can directly engage in direct dialogue with the many agencies both in the federal and state government as well as political leaders. The social media platform is also a great tool for the sector to engage back.

What then are the benefits of using social media in the public sector? There are a lot. But the most important is that it helps build public trust and it is very cost-effective

Social Media in Building Public Trust The public demands transparency and no matter how good your industry is, it still needs the approval of the public. By making your department more accessible through various social media channels, you can gain trust and respect.

What is the latest news about the sector? Are there new programs? How about a crisis? Do you have events laid out for the public? Through social media, all this information can reach a lot of people effectively.

Social Media Being Cost-Effective for the Government

The digital world is continuously evolving. In the government before, it was perceived as a tool to provide the public with e-services and information being shared via useful links was more upfront and formal.

Today, social media is more approachable and easier to access. Everyone can have access to the internet through their smartphones. Information dissemination is easier now than before. The government needs not to pay millions of dollars in public relations and outreach. Various social media platforms can become a free tool to raise awareness and get the public involved.

As a whole, social media platforms serve as effective tools for the government to send the message across to the public. Building followers, being active and engaging effectively are some things that the government and the agencies must strive further. These virtual tools are helpful not just today but, in the years, to come. Social media is present and the future of the new media.

Challenges for Social Media Use In The Public Sector

Social media use is highly volatile for three reasons:

- 1) loss of control over the technology;
- 2) citizen and employee behavior;

3) digital literacy.

1. The technology itself is hosted by third-party providers who are not under the control of the information technology office, like, e.g., enterprise information systems or the in-house email system. Changes to the technology are therefore more rapid and follow market needs instead of government needs. In order to avoid missteps, the government has to constantly update its own routines to assess whether the technological changes are still resulting in the intended outcomes.

2. Online citizen behavior follows their offline preferences on how individuals prefer to connect to humans, but also to information pieces. This is usually contrary to a bureaucratic streamlined and restricted information paradigm. As a result, every social media platform reflects different preferences and also a different online culture. Aligning these two seemingly opposite needs will result in increased flexibility in the way that government uses emerging social media tools.

3. Digital literacy and access aspects are elevated on social media. The intention to move government communication on to social media channels is to reach those parts of the population that is otherwise not reachable to the government. However, social media applications allow citizens to opt out of direct contact with the government. In addition, while 70% of online adults are using at least one social media channel, those parts of the population that are not using the Internet and social media are not accessible for government interaction. Digital literacy aspects also play a role when designing social media interactions and gaining top management buy-in, so that the internal education and training is needed to help government officials understand the value of social media investments.