Varsity Coaches Conference 2014: Social Media

Presented by the United Spirit Association

This course will go over the Social Media craze, how to use it to your advantage, and the do’s and don’ts of media technology utilizing the top 4 social media site- Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.

Social media is a growing and inevitable entity that has helped us to connect with each other in ways never thought possible. In many ways, social media sites can be incredibly beneficial for a team or organization to use to help create larger connections with your students and your community.

It is inevitable that we should all turn to Social Media sites to keep in contact with the rest of the world. Social Media can be beneficial for your team and program in endless ways. It can help you keep in contact with your students, aid you in understanding how they interact with one another, and give students ways to get even more involved in their school. HOWEVER, there can be many dangers that come along with Social Media, and it is important for you to protect your team, organization, school, and students be being prepared with a Social Media plan early in your season.

STATISTICS and FIGURES:

Time spent on social media networks per hour: U.S. = 16 minutes per hour.

“Facebook and Instagram users are the most engaged [on social media]. Around 60% of their users sign in every day (compared to 45% of Twitter users).”

“Instagammers also use Twitter. There is a 50% crossover between the networks.”

“Instagram’s engagement is 15x Facebook’s.”

“90% of Instagram users are under 35.”

“57% of users use Instagram on a daily basis.”

“35% of Instagram users visit Instagram more than once per day.”
Social Media Terminology:

Blog- A Web publishing tool that allows self-published posts, listed in reverse chronological order.

Comment- A response to a post on Facebook or Instagram, on behalf of a reader.

Direct Message – This is the only way to talk to someone on Twitter or Instagram privately. You can create these by either starting your tweet with “DM” or going to someone’s profile and using the “message” function.

Engagement – The number of likes, comments, and shares you receive.

Facebook- A social network where users maintain a profile of their personal interests, add friends and exchange messages.

Follow- The act of signing up to receive the tweets of another Twitter user.

Follower- A person who has signed up on Twitter to receive your tweets.

Friend- On Facebook, a user who is accepted into an individual's social network. (Verb) - The act of requesting admittance into an individual's social network on Facebook.

Friends – A friend is someone who received your friend request and accepted it. Once the request is accepted, you will start seeing their updates in your news feed.

Hashtags – Although they were originally created and supported by Twitter, hashtags are now utilized on Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram, Vine, Google+, and Tumblr. A hashtag is a group of words or phrases (with no spaces), preceded by a # sign (i.e. #ONECON or #cheerleadersrule). It is used to tie various social media posts together and relate them to a topic. Topics are sometimes connected to an event, TV show, sporting event, or any happening or trend etc.

Like- Functionality shared by several social networks, including Facebook and Instagram, which allows users to recommend content or demonstrate agreement with commentary. This recommendation is shared with the social network, and also serves to move popular content up in the news feed or search rankings.

News Feed- On Facebook, a live feed of status updates and wall posts, filtered by an algorithm which brings the items that are most relevant to each user to the top of the list.

Page – This is your business profile or “page” where customers can find your posts and business information.

Page “Like” – When a fan “likes” your page, anything you post or update will show up in their news feed.

Profile- An individual's identifying information requested when that individual signs up for a social networking site or other service. Profile information may include a username, contact information, personal or business interests, a photo, bio, or other data.

Reply – You can reply directly to a tweet. Only the people following you and the person you’re replying to can see your reply.
Retweet – A way to repost or share someone else’s tweet.

Status Update- Brief description, posted to a social network of what a user is doing or feeling in real time.

Trends – The most commonly used hashtags at that present time are considered trends.

Tweet- A 140-character update shared through Twitter.

Twitter- A popular microblogging tool, which allows users to share updates of no more than 140 characters, also known as tweets.

Wall- On Facebook, a shared message board regarding an individual user that appears on the user's profile. A user's friends can post content, such as text, photos, or URLs, to the wall, and others can either like or comment on that content.


Ways to Engage Your Team/ Organization

Want to get your group involved on Social Media? Try some of the following:

-Create a team page or account that you can post to share information, flyers, and pictures with supporters and fans. (Example: See the “United Spirit Association” page on Facebook or @usacamps on Twitter or Instagram).

-Establish a Private Facebook group- private, in-team conversation. Keep the team up-to-date with practice times, performances, costumes, etc. without having to post publicly to your team page or your own wall.

  *Often is a quicker and more efficient way of contacting the team than emails and calls, because of how frequently our students visit Facebook and other Social Media sites.

  **Tip:** One of the best features of these private groups is that you have the ability to see who has viewed each post you have posted. That way, it is much more difficult for students to give the excuse of “not having seen directions”, when you can see clearly in the group that they have.

-Create a hashtag! - Try and find something that is appropriate, motivating, and that is unique to the team and your mission (example: USA’s hashtag for summer is our camp theme and slogan, “It’s Our Time!”, and so our official hashtag is #itsOURtime.) This way, your students can get more involved in helping to spread the word about special events and share their own team photos, while connecting them to your official hashtag.

  **Tip:** Research potential hashtags, especially if they are acronyms (i.e. #bwlc) to make sure they are not already associated with something negative. Type in the hashtag to Instagram or twitter search bar and see what pictures come up.
- **Assign an official Social Media person for your team**- This person will be in charge of creating all of, or the majority of you social media posts and/or maintaining your team’s official Social Media pages. This person could be you, an assistant coach, or one of your most trustworthy and responsible students.

- **Create flyers and edit photos with apps and online resources**- Some ones that we use frequently and recommend are PicStich, PicLab, PicPlayPost, Text Camera, and the website [www.Pixlr.com](http://www.Pixlr.com).

- **Download the myVarsity app**- Stay updated with Varsity brand events to create your team calendars early in the year, edit photos from camp and add fun overlays, set team goals, and shop for fun camp, practice, and competition gear!

- **Create Your Own Flyers**- Important programs to use include Microsoft Publisher and [www.Pixlr.com](http://www.Pixlr.com). Google Image search is a great resource for finding logos and images, and if you are looking to find images that don’t have a white border, search for “transparent png” images to find images with a more professional look.

**Best times to Post on Social Media:**

*Resources online have provided what they believe are ideal times to post, but many vary. Based on our own experience, we suggest that you evaluate the following to determine times to post:

1) Consider your audience. Who are you trying to reach with this particular post?
   a. High School/ Middle School age: around 12:30pm (lunch break), between 2:00pm and 4:00pm (when released from school)
   b. Adults/ Parents/ Fellow Coaches/ Sponsors: between 6:00am and 8:00am (before work), around 12:30pm (lunch break), between 5:00pm and 8:00pm (after work)

2) What does your OWN social media schedule look like? What times do YOU engage? This may also guide you about what times may be ideal for other people’s engagement.

**Where to Post:**

*Where you post makes a significant difference in the engagement of your followers. Based on our experience and the previously listed statistics, consider the following:

1) Facebook- The most engagement we typically receive on the USA Facebook page is from coaches, parents, staff members. When posting about special events, fundraisers, clinics, competitions, and other events where you feel like you will especially need the support of parents, school staff, and other adults, Facebook is the ideal place to post.

2) Twitter- Seemingly equal number of participants from teen and adult groups. Great for posting quick announcements or fun photos!

3) Instagram- Many of Instagram’s users are in the teen and young adult range. Ideal pictures and flyers to post on here include special events, fundraisers, tryouts, team pictures, and any other things that you would like to have this age group engage in.

**What to Post:**

Examples of what to post include, but are not limited to:
- Information about games, fundraisers, charity events, team’s successes, positive messages in support of the school and its teams/groups, pictures of the team at school/charity/camp/competitions, flyers about tryouts and special team performances, videos of team performances, etc.

Examples of what **NOT** to post include, but are not limited to:

- Negative comments about students at school or on the team, negative comments about other squads or schools, pictures of the team posing with inappropriate gestures, wearing questionable clothing, retweeting any posts with bad language

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**Social Media Hazards:**

*Creating a Social Media Policy for Your team*

Maintain the image of your school and team by creating a Social Media Policy early on in the season. Avoid major problems, including potential lawsuits, by having a strict policy in place that requires student and parent/guardian signature, that clearly lays out what will not be tolerated and what consequences for breaking policy will be.

**Here are some examples of policies that you may consider when creating your own:**

**Example #1:** “**Misconduct Policy** - Cheerleading is a privilege and not a right. You are a student-athlete and a student leader. Any behavior, which does not represent the school and its cheerleaders in a positive way, is considered reason for termination from the team. You are your school’s cheerleader while in the classroom, on the playing field and in your community. You will be held accountable for your actions at ALL times. Skipping school, public displays of affection, profanity, drug or alcohol use (and that means red cups), fighting and other major offenses will not be tolerated. No trash talk in person, on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snap Chat, Kik, Text, email or any type of Social Media, about any other cheerleader on our squad or other squads from other schools! Minor infractions will also be handled with extreme severity. Consequences include suspension from participation in cheerleading activities. Major infractions will be reason for immediate dismissal from the team by the coach. As a representative of this school, you are expected to always bring honor to yourself, your school, your team and your coach.”

**Example #2:** “Pictures of students holding a red cup = 0 tolerance, automatically removed from team

*Pictures in uniform at parties= Suspended from 1 game or event.*

*Allowing non-teammates to borrow and wear team gear in photos= suspended from 1 game or event.*”

**Example #3:**

- “Posting or providing any information on a personal blog or social networking site that does not portray a positive image and/or uphold the standards of this team are grounds for dismissal from the team. This includes, but is not limited to:
a. posting derogatory, harassing, or insulting comments or photos about fellow teammates or schoolmates, other schools/teams, our activities as a team or our Social Media followers.

b. Photos or videos that contain nudity, underage drinking or drug use, provocative poses, inappropriate attire, etc.

*If you feel someone’s behavior is inappropriate, please report it to your coach or advisor. “

Creating a Social Media policy for your own team will depend on a number of factors.

- First, it is important to be very familiar with the school’s policies, if there are any, and follow them closely.

- Having administrative support is also critical, so be sure to give a preliminary copy of your Social Media Policy to your administration for review.

- Have a clear idea of how you would like your team to be presented, create strict guidelines about what is deemed acceptable or unacceptable on Social Media.

- Have a clear list of what consequences will result from a student breaking their Social Media Policy agreement and stick to it.

- Demonstrate positive Social Media behavior, if you are active on Social Media

  *As the coach or Advisor, it is equally important that YOU do not post anything that you wouldn’t want your students to see or replicate.

- Find a way to monitor the team’s social media activity. With the USA, we like to quickly browse through our Social Media site engagement 2x a day for about 10 minutes total. This allows us to keep up to date and on aware of what is happening in the Social Media sphere around our organization.

  * It may seem like a major commitment to keep tabs so frequently, but keep in mind how quickly social media posts and pictures can spread, how they remain in cyberspace even after being “deleted”, and how important the safety of your students and your program is.

Although Social Media can be, at times, overwhelming, keep in mind all of the ways in which it can help establish and build new and strong relationships, and of course, DON’T FORGET TO HAVE FUN! 😊

Questions about Social Media? Please don’t hesitate to contact:

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Don’t forget to follow the United Spirit Association on Social Media!

Facebook: United Spirit Association

Instagram: @usacamps

Twitter: @usacamps

YouTube: usacamps

SOURCES:

