Social Media Guidelines and Best Practices

Social media continues to emerge as an important marketing tool, reaching our primary and secondary audiences quickly and efficiently. It is important to develop a consistent and authentic voice.

Delaware Valley College recognizes the importance of social media and the significant impact that these marketing tools have on the College.

The Office of Marketing and Communications oversees the official accounts for Delaware Valley College:

- Twitter: twitter.com/delvalcollege
- Facebook: facebook.com/delval
- YouTube: youtube.com/delvalcollege
- LinkedIn: linkedin.com/company/Delaware-valley-college
- Pinterest: pinterest.com/delvalcollege
- Instagram: instagram.com/delvalcollege

Many offices and departments have established or are interested in establishing their own accounts. To do so, please complete the online Social Media Strategy form. Marcom will link the official College accounts to your office/departmental accounts and ask to have a marcom team member assigned administrative rights to your page.

Departments that would like to develop an account should consider their audiences, messages, and goals, as well as a strategy for keeping the information on their social media sites up-to-date. Contact the Office of Marketing Communications beforehand so that we can help you figure out the best platform to meet your needs.

Consistency is imperative and ensuring that we have a coordinated communication effort will enhance the total social media experience for our collective audiences. Often there is a blurred line between personal voice and institutional voice, and because many operating official accounts for the College often have personal accounts as well, the Office of Marketing and Communications has developed this document with guidelines and best practices.

Best Practices for Social Media

Post regularly. Social media is most successful when it is updated on a regular basis. Each site has different expectations (post to Twitter more often than Facebook). Create a content calendar and plan what you would like to post in advance, so you are sure to always have something to say.

Be brief. Twitter only gives you 140 characters, but Facebook gives you more than 5,000. That doesn’t mean you should use them all. Remember your readers want you to get to the point. When at all possible, always link your posts back to the DelVal website. Keep your post brief, redirecting visitors to content that exists on the institutional website.
Be authentic. Find a voice. Always speak as “we.” Not “I.” Not “they.”

Use visuals to help tell the story. The more multimedia content you can provide, the better engaged your audience will be. Photos and video should look professional and follow DelVal visual standards and guidelines.

Be honest and fair. This is your chance to share part of the DelVal story with an interested audience. Don’t be afraid to let your personality shine through as part of the voice, but be aware that what you are saying is considered official and should therefore always be professional, well-informed, and encouraging.

Be accurate and transparent. Have the facts before you post. If you post inaccurate information, correct it quickly. Social media platforms are successful when they offer authentic and direct communication.

Respond to comments. There may be times when someone responds to something you’ve said – and they won’t always agree with you. Either way, take the time to respond gracefully to comments or questions the followers have, even if they are critical. Try to limit the more difficult conversations to direct messages or take them to a private space like Facebook message or email. Set up ways to monitor mentions and RTs from your account, so you can respond appropriately.

Be selective with your followers. You don’t have to follow or like everyone who follows or likes you. In fact, you shouldn’t. Be selective and strategic in creating your online social media personality. Follow accounts that make sense for your account to engage. For example: other DelVal accounts, Doylestown accounts; for athletics, team accounts or athletic accounts of colleges in the MAC.

Content
It seems obvious, but should be stated. Remember that you are posting on behalf of the College, and all posts should be appropriate for that usage. Use good judgment about content and respect privacy laws. Do not include confidential information about the College, its faculty, staff, students, or alumni. And the legal stuff – respect copyright, intellectual property and fair use laws. (For more information, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fair_use.)

Avatar usage
Many avatars associated with social media accounts are not of appropriate size to contain the Delaware Valley College logo or wordmark. In most cases, the stacked wordmark will work best, but may not distinguish your account from the College’s primary account. In that case, use an iconic and identifiable image as your graphical representation. Consider using a portrait or photo of your location. (Do not create your own logo for the avatar.) The Office of Marketing and Communications is happy to create this avatar for you.

Best Practices for Facebook
The goal of Facebook is to build a presence to attract people, and to build a community.
**Know your audience.** Facebook is the true melting pot of audiences – students, faculty, staff, alumni, community members, and donors. When it comes to our students, Facebook is the primary home for our current and accepted students. Prospective students like to remain anonymous and tend to lurk on Twitter, where they can go unnoticed.

**Know the lingo.** Facebook is ever evolving. Yesterday's “group” is today’s “page.” Before creating an account, think about what your goal is and research the best way to set up your account.

**Don't over-saturate with multiple accounts when one can do.** If your department has an official account, and you also have an account for an annual event or your staff members have accounts as official representatives of your office, you will dilute the number of your likes and followers, and are not leveraging the strength and awareness of your office.

For example: an account for “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs” has 117 “likes”; Sneezy has 14, Doc has 28, and Dopey has 36. Under one account, it could have 195 and reach a larger audience and have a greater impact.

**Best Practices for Twitter**

The goal of Twitter is to be short, create a conversation, and go viral.

**Know the lingo.** Because there are only 140 characters, there are a lot of abbreviations and acronyms on Twitter.

- **#** = hashtag. Used to mark keywords or topics in a tweet, hashtags allow users to see all of the tweets about a topic, such as #Doylestown, quickly all in one place
- **RT** = retweet. Placed before the retweeted text when users manually retweet a message.
- **MT** = modified tweet. Placed before the retweeted text when users manually retweet a message with modifications, for example shortening a Tweet.
  - **Original tweet from @FaerieTaleFarm**
    - “Farm is invited back to the Market at Delaware Valley College, a fund raiser event for us. Each weekend 9/29 to 10/28. Come see alpacas!”
  - **Modified tweet from @EatLocalBucks**
    - “Nice! MT @FaerieTaleFarm Farm is invited back to the Market at @DelValCollege #Doylestown ~ each weekend 9/29 to 10/28. Come see alpacas!”
- **DM** = direct message. It’s a private message, like an email, but still can only contain 140 characters. You can only DM someone who is following you.
- **#FF** = Follow Friday. It’s a way to thank those who have retweeted you or who you have interacted with during the past week.
  - **A Friday tweet from @tmabucks**
    - “#FF #BucksCounty edition: @LowerBksChamber @VisitBucksPA @UWBucks @PBweatherandtra @buzz_in_bucks @YMCALowerBucks @ChiefPressler @Bucks_edu”
Understand how and when to use hashtags. Consistent hashtag usage on Twitter allows for more cohesion, more consistency, and a better user experience. For more, see What are Hashtags?: https://support.twitter.com/articles/49309-what-are-hashtags-symbols

DelVal specific hashtags
- Precarious Alliance -- #delvalalliance
- Move-In -- #delvalmovein
- A-Day -- #aday
- Homecoming -- #delvalhomecoming

Live tweeting can make the world even smaller. Tweeting from an event can make your followers feel like they’re in the room. Provide a mix of fact and color. Avoid getting into the habit of only tweeting a stream of sound bites from the speaker.

Keep your followers engaged. Tweet on topics and with a consistent frequency. Answer questions, comment on other tweets, retweet other posts. It’s about creating a social conversation within your community.

Know your limits and avoid over-saturation. Tweeting or retweeting too much becomes white noise. Followers may mute you or worse, unfollow you, if the account becomes too annoying.

Know how your audience is engaging with you. Shorten links through bit.ly in order to track your followers’ level of activity. It’s important to know what content your audience is interested in hearing about or reading. Just because the information is not retweeted doesn’t mean that your followers didn’t read it. Visit http://bit.ly for more information about tracking which links are followed from your tweets.

Your @name counts in the 140 characters in RTs. If you think your tweet will be retweeted, don’t go to the full 140 characters. Leave room for attribution -- @delvalcollege is 14 characters. When we have something retweet-worthy, we know we have to say it 126 characters.

Facebook and Twitter are not the same thing, and should not be treated as such. It seems like a win-win to link Facebook and Twitter to share the same post on both platforms at the same time. But it’s not.
- Your audiences are slightly different, and it’s obvious that you didn’t write for this platform.
- The writing for each platform is unique and can be confusing when you put Twitter-speak – usernames (@someone) and hashtags (#something) – on Facebook.
- You lose the power that each platform has – longer posts on Facebook will be abbreviated on Twitter.
Best Practices for YouTube

The goal of YouTube is to share multimedia with the audiences you have on Facebook and Twitter.

Maximum exposure. All videos should go to Office of Marketing and Communications (communications@delval.edu) for posting in the DelVal YouTube channel. By including your video in the official YouTube channel, you increase the chance that your video will have maximum impact for your unit and for the College.

Make it easy for your audience. When making a video longer than 3:00 minutes, also prepare a 30-second to 1-minute highlight version that is more appropriate for a general audience. This short version promotes the full video. Think of it as a “trailer” for your longer video. Make sure the short version includes a graphic that promotes the full video.

Use a bumper. Bumpers are slides that are used at the beginning and/or end of a video. It helps with branding. It helps with consistency. And it adds credibility to your production. Contact the Office of Marketing and Communications (communications@delval.edu) for assistance with bumpers.

Final thoughts...

Social media should be:
• Smart
• Fun
• Informative
• Responsible
• Responsive
• Diverse