Using Social Media in Public Organizations:
Promising Practices from North Carolina’s
Parks and Recreation Departments

By
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Executive Summary
This capstone explores how governmental agencies use social media, specifically Facebook and Twitter, to present information, facilitate conversation and receive feedback. Seventy-four of the 231 County and Municipal Parks and Recreation (P&R) Departments in North Carolina have a Facebook and/or Twitter account, each of which is managed uniquely. Despite these differences, the following recommendations can help organizations manage social sites: (1) create the appropriate account early, (2) use the site to its fullest capacity, (3) identify and establish roles and responsibilities and (4) plan for, monitor and evaluate the site. By understanding the social media trend and following these measures, local governments can take control of social media, rather than letting the individual site or the trend manage the organization.
Background
Social media are inexpensive, if not free, online tools used to communicate and interact with others. Since the early 21st Century, many types of social sites, such as blogs (LiveJournal), micro-blogs (Twitter), social networks (Facebook) and video sharing (YouTube), have emerged. But today, Facebook and Twitter are the most popular. Launched in 2004, Facebook helps members communicate information and facilitate dialogue; Facebook has over 500 million members. Twitter, which started in 2006, allows users to send messages of 140 characters or less; Twitter should reach 200 million users soon. (Given the nature of this topic, technology terms are asterisked and described in Appendix Table 1.)

Government agencies have varying opinions of these sites. Many are skeptical about their impact, potential political humiliation and legal implications, so they disregard these options. Others believe the sites help achieve the International City/County Management Association’s Code of Ethics “of keeping the community informed on local government affairs and encouraging communication …” Currently, 66 percent of government agencies employ a social site, with counties and municipalities at the forefront.

Governmental departments can benefit from using these sites. For example, Parks and Recreation (P&R) Departments can communicate information to a larger audience and build community at little to no cost. And as Waller states, if P&R “embrace social media applications it will enable a more direct and positive relationship with consumers, which will in turn drive increased engagement and loyalty.”

This study has two parts which explore social media in the public sector. First, the study examines how North Carolina P&R Departments employ Facebook and Twitter to provide guidance on creating and managing social sites. Second, the study analyzes social media policies and presents items to consider for a policy. These practices apply to local governments that use or consider using a site.

Methodology
After a thorough literature review, this study spanned three stages. Each step, including the initial literature review, is explained further in Table 2 of the Appendix.

Phase 1: Identify the P&R Departments with Facebook and/or Twitter
A three-part search identified P&R Departments with Facebook and/or Twitter. First, each County and Municipal P&R Department website was explored for a link to a departmental Facebook or Twitter account. If no account was discovered, a search was done on Facebook and Twitter, under predetermined titles, for each P&R Department. Finally, if no account was located, the P&R Director was emailed and asked whether the Department uses either social site. Of the 231 County and Municipal P&R Departments, 74 were found to have Facebook and/or Twitter (see Appendix Table 3 and Chart 1).

Phase 2: Survey P&R Departments with Facebook or Twitter
An electronic survey, consisting of 30 questions, was administered to the Director, or designee, of each Department identified in Phase One. To understand how and why P&R Departments invest their efforts with Facebook and/or Twitter, the survey examined:

- Whether Facebook or Twitter was used and when each site was launched;
- The purpose and reason for the sites;
- How the sites are employed and managed;
- What type of social media policy is in place and
- What challenges or issues the Department faced.
For accurate and representative results, two measures were taken. First, three jurisdictions piloted the survey; the feedback was valuable but did not drastically alter the questions. Second, Directors who did not initially respond received up to two electronic reminders (see Appendix Image 1 for the survey).

**Phase 3: Analyze the Policies of Survey Respondents**

All Departments included in the survey analysis were contacted regarding their policies. These organizations were asked whether the County or Municipality or the Department itself had a social media policy. An analysis of the obtained policies revealed similarities and other essential factors. Thus, this step uncovered additional data about how the Departments manage social media.

This study had a few limitations. One was the lack of scholarly research on social media and P&R. Another was the low response rate to the email in Phase One; these data categorized Departments to be surveyed. Last, the number of qualified participants led to a small number of observations, making statistical analysis nearly impractical. Given these limitations, this research draws conclusions and offers recommendations regarding the (1) creation and management of social sites and (2) formulation of a social media policy.

**Findings and Recommendations**

**Part 1: Survey Results and Recommendations**

Of the 74 P&R Departments with Facebook and/or Twitter, 63% responded to the survey. The analysis excludes five responses – one because the respondent only answered three survey questions and the others because they said they are not a Facebook or Twitter account holder. Therefore, the analysis and recommendations are based on 42 respondents.

**Survey Findings**

The survey reveals the following conclusions.

*Use and Age of Accounts*

P&R Departments employ Facebook more than Twitter. All 42 respondents have Facebook, with page accounts as the most common type, while 14 have Twitter (see Appendix Chart 2). Most of these accounts, as Appendix Charts 3 and 4 show, are less than two years old. Also, the longer a Department has had Facebook, the more likely it is to use Twitter (see Appendix Table 4).

*Overall Motives*

Two reasons P&R Departments create social sites are to communicate and engage citizens and to market programs and services. More than half of survey respondents post information about events, programs, classes, arts and/or cultural arts and parks, greenways and facilities. Thus, the content posted on these sites align with the Departments’ stated purpose for starting and maintaining social sites (see Appendix Chart 5 and Table 5).

*Main Concerns*

Respondents express minimal concern over the potential problems of these sites. The main concern is the legal implications, but only five Departments identified this issue. Other factors are the lack of staffing knowledge, staffing time and funding (see Appendix Table 6). The survey respondent’s expertise and the nature of his/her work could influence the items emphasized; for example IT staff may worry about security breach while HR employees may agonize about reputational damage.

*Time Necessary to Update and Maintain Accounts*

Although Departments update these sites frequently, they do not require excessive time. Many P&R update Facebook weekly (42.9%) or daily (28.6%) (see Appendix Chart 6). More than half of them, however, allocate less than five hours a month to the account. The frequency of updating Twitter is...
more dispersed; but 12 of the 14 Departments spend less than five hours a month on the site, which further corroborates this finding (see Appendix Chart 7 and 8).

Responsibilities for Supervising and Updating
In many Departments, the Director, Supervisor and/or Staff oversee the account as well as post and update content (see Appendix Chart 9 and Chart 10). Several organizations designate more than one employee to each of these tasks (see Appendix Table 7). In addition, many departments – 29 users of Facebook and 13 of Twitter – assign the same employees to fulfill both functions.

Evaluation Methods
A majority of respondents do not analyze their use of these sites. Of the 42 Facebook account holders, 14 evaluate their use of Facebook. As Table 8 in the Appendix details, these Departments:

- Track the activity manually, such as counting fans, posts, etc,
- Analyze weekly reports provided by Facebook and
- Ask citizens how they heard about the event and if they utilize the social media site.

In addition, the one Twitter user that tracks its activity does so by measuring outputs, such as number of retweets and responses.

Use of Third Party Systems
Organizations tend to overlook third-party systems*, like Twitterfeed or Hootsuite. Only six Departments with Facebook and six with Twitter have implemented a third-party system (see Appendix Table 9). Analysis indicates that larger Departments are more likely to use these systems for Facebook (see Appendix Table 10).

Governing Policies
P&R Departments regulate these sites differently. Of the 42 respondents, 17 follow a County or Municipal policy; of the adopted policies, most became official within the last two years. Additionally, only one department has a departmental policy while 19 have an informal social media policy (see Appendix Chart 11 and Chart 12).

Recommendations
The following recommendations apply to governments with or without existing social sites.

1. Don’t wait – create an appropriate account for the organization: Organizations should create an account early and understand the specific terms of agreement to set up the right type of account. Creating an account early can prevent others from establishing one in the organization’s name. In this study, for instance, four respondents say they do not have Facebook or Twitter, but the Department has a searchable account; someone not currently affiliated with the organization must have started the account. Additionally, agencies must understand the terms of agreement so they employ the proper type of account. Facebook, for example, requires organizations to use a page account* not a friend account; entities using the wrong type can lose privileges on the site. As Cole explains, “Yes it is risky to be a pioneer, but in a rapidly changing world, it’s even riskier to be left behind.”xvii So, create the right type of account and create it early.

2. Use the site to its fullest capacity: Linking social sites to municipal and departmental webpages and using third party systems are two tactics to maximize the use of Facebook and Twitter. Social media and webpages have unique purposes. xiii By linking social sites to the webpage, the organization establishes consistency and credibility; by linking the webpage to social media, through identifiable icons, the audience that knows about and possibly uses the site increases. xiii Furthermore, third-party
systems, like Twitterfeed and Hootsuite feed data from one site into multiple sites. These tools help communicate consistent information, save time, increase collaboration and monitor as well as track data. Several practitioners found these tactics to maximize the benefits of social media.

3. Identify and establish roles and responsibilities: To effectively manage social sites, organizations should clarify and communicate employee roles and responsibilities. As Di Maio and McClure explain, having a “standardized content management process to release and retire content, as well as to monitor user comments and tags” ensures the account positively portrays the organization. Thus, agencies should identify different employees to post and update content and to oversee the site. Employees should also understand the importance of communicating accurate, timely and pertinent information through authentic messages. As research shows, the most flourishing municipalities update sites, like Facebook and Twitter, at least once a day with relevant postings. Moreover, clearly determined and communicated roles and responsibilities are vital to the site’s success.

4. Plan for, monitor and evaluate the site and make necessary changes: Organizations should have an established and implemented policy and evaluation plan. A social media policy can mitigate communication problems and protect the agency’s reputation. To create this policy, the organization should discuss the site’s potential risks and strategies with employees with various expertise as they bring different ideas and solutions to the table. As Walls and Di Maio state, assess the risks “in terms of probability of occurrence and scale of impact to … establish risk management priorities.” Furthermore, an evaluation plan, which draws on a combination of output, efficiency and effectiveness measures, can identify if the organization is using the correct site, if objectives are being met and if changes are needed. A policy and evaluation plan are essential in managing the site.

Part II: Policy Analysis and Recommendations

Policy Analysis
To further understand how jurisdictions manage social sites, 17 County or Municipal policies and one departmental policy were obtained and analyzed in detail. Of the 18 policies, 11 are standalone social media/network policies. The other seven address this topic in a section of or throughout an existing policy. Of these 18 policies, 13 have been officially adopted.

Many items appear in the policies. Over half of the documents state the:

- Definition of social media.
- Purpose of social media.
- Employees covered by the policy.
- Way an employee should carry him/herself or present information on these sites.
- Site is department managed.
- Basic information on public record and retention laws.
- Restrictions on an employee’s personal use of these sites.

Several policies also explain who and how many employees supervise and/or maintain the site; the process to create a social site; the type of inappropriate information that can and will be edited and/or removed and the process to edit or remove information or an entire site. Table 11 in the Appendix lists all 25 items.

Recommendations
When creating a policy it is critical to include employees with various expertise. Each employee can emphasize different ideas. So although Human Resources should spearhead the development and
implementation of the policy, the County/Municipal Attorney, Manager, Information Technology Department, Communications Department and other Departments that can use social sites should be represented. This team of employees can “matter a great deal” with the social site. xxii

In creating a policy, refer to the items in Appendix Table 11. Strongly consider the factors below.

1. Explain that social sites are secondary to the webpage: As Waller explains, “your website is the most stable communication tool the agency owns and social media should be used in tandem with the website for effective communication and marketing.” xxvii The policy should highlight the value of the website and the fact that it takes precedence over social media.

2. Require a business case or proposal for the site: A business proposal helps organizations clarify the intended goal, audience and strategy which influences the site to use. Research found that governments without a carefully considered plan for a social site have been less successful. xxix Thus, the policy should state this requirement and the importance of the document.

3. Centralize the management of the site: Many municipalities emphasize the value of having centralized control over the posting of information on these sites. xxv So, identify who maintains the log-ins and passwords to ensure one employee does not own access to the site. And determine how often an individual outside the department will monitor the site. Both of these actions help protect the reputation of the organization and should be explained in the policy.

4. Describe the process for handling problems: Analyze, communicate and discuss anticipated issues as well as specific mitigation strategies. xxix At minimum, the policy should include the process for identifying and communicating current as well as potential challenges and, if possible, the determined mitigation strategies.

5. Explain or reference the disciplinary procedure for inappropriate behavior: As Bittinger and Di Maio found, staff should know and understand “relevant organizational strategies, policies, governance mechanisms, risks and potential implications of their action[s].” xxxvi To clarify these expectations, the policy should specifically address acceptable versus unacceptable behavior of employees and the consequences of inappropriate actions.

6. Create guidelines for the public: communicate them internally and externally: Many jurisdictions have a policy regulating the public’s use of social sites. Kingsley found that these guidelines “make editorial decisions much less painful” since they provide justification for what to remove or edit. xxvii Thus, the policy and social site should communicate the guidelines for or expectations of the public.

Three comprehensive, yet unique, policies to reference as a guide are: the City of Greensboro’s Employee Use of Social Networks; Alamance County’s Social Media Web Site Policy and Cabarrus County’s External Communication Policy.

**Conclusion**

As this research shows and the recommendations suggest, governments should invest effort in social media. Social sites provide innovative ways to communicate, allow for discussion, increase collaboration and build relationships. xxviii Although social media is constantly evolving, the low costs and resource requirements make it a valuable tool. When considering which sites to use, Facebook and Twitter are “must haves;” they are currently the most popular, each with a unique purpose and audience. xxix There is not one correct way to employ these or other social sites. But to be successful, organizations should at least understand the site’s purpose, detail the reason and strategy for using the site, create and implement necessary policies and design an evaluation plan. It is better to control social media than to let social media control the organization.


http://hootsuite.com/


Table 1: Definition of Technical Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Networks</td>
<td>Social Networks are a type of social media. Social Networks are online sites that work to build and maintain the social relationships among individuals and entities. These networks allow users to communicate and share activities, ideas, events, interests with others that they choose to connect with.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogs</td>
<td>Blogs are another type of social media. Researchers define blogs “as interactive, non-synchronous webpages whose host uploads postings that center around a topic.” Typically, blogs include a comments section in which viewers can comment on the original posting or other comments made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micro-Blogs</td>
<td>Micro-blogs are another type of social media. Micro-blogs are similar to blogs in that through this technology information around any topic is communicated. Micro-blogs differ from blogs in that the size of the content is limited. For example, Twitter, a micro-blogging site, supports the communication of messages that are 140 characters or less.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video Sharing</td>
<td>Video sharing is another type of social media. Through this site, users can upload videos or video clips. The host of the site will store the video and allow others to view the video.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page Accounts</td>
<td>Pages are a type of Facebook account that users can create. A page account should be created by businesses or political, commercial or charitable organizations. These entities can use page accounts to promote their cause.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third-party systems</td>
<td>Third-party systems are technologies that enable individuals and organizations to have data that are entered into one site feed into many other sites. For example, when a message is entered into a third-party system, the message can post on Facebook and Twitter simultaneously. Examples of third-party systems include Twitterfeed, Hootsuite and RSS.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 2: Detailed Description of the Methodology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Detailed Description of Step</th>
<th>Pre-Step</th>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Step 2</th>
<th>Step 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The goal was to gather preliminary information on social media. Research centered on the background of social media and its use by local governments and Parks and Recreation. I referenced the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill’s Library Resources heavily throughout this step.</td>
<td>This step uncovered which P&amp;R Departments use Facebook and/or Twitter. To achieve this objective, I:</td>
<td>All 74 P&amp;R Departments identified in Step One as using Facebook and/or Twitter received an electronic survey, consisting of 30 questions. This survey examined:</td>
<td>All 42 Departments included in the survey analysis were contacted regarding their social media policies. These departments were asked whether the County or Municipality had a policy governing the use of social sites and whether the Department had its own policy. An analysis of the obtained policies helped identify similarities and other essential factors. This step gathered additional data about how the Departments manage social media.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1. Conducted a search on each of the 76 County and 155 Municipal P&amp;R Department websites. If the website had a link to a department Facebook or Twitter account, I explored and confirmed the social site and documented the information. If the website did not have a link or the site could not be confirmed, the investigation continued onto the next stage.</td>
<td>1. Whether Facebook and/or Twitter are used and when each one was started.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Searched Facebook and Twitter, for each county or municipality, under the following predetermined titles of: (1) ‘County/Municipality Parks and Recreation’, (2) ‘County/Municipality Park(s)’, (3) ‘County/Municipality Recreation’ and (4) ‘County/ Municipality’ for the first 75 results. If I found an account, I documented the information; if not, the search continued.</td>
<td>2. The purpose of or reasons for using these sites.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Contacted the P&amp;R Director. This email briefly explained the project and asked whether the Department used Facebook and/or Twitter.</td>
<td>3. How these accounts are managed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>This process identified a total of 74 P&amp;R Departments.</td>
<td>4. What type of social media policy is in place and when it was adopted.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5. Whether these sites are evaluated and what types of evaluation measures are used.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6. What challenges or issues were faced in establishing and/or managing these sites.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Two measures ensured that results were accurate and representative. First, before the administration of the test, three jurisdictions piloted the survey; the feedback was valuable but did not significantly alter the survey. In addition, the Director, or designee, of Departments that had yet to participate in the study received up to two electronic reminders that encouraged their participation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Of the 74 Departments identified in Step One, 47 responded to the survey. The analysis excludes five respondents -- one respondent only answered three questions and the other four said they did not have a Facebook or Twitter account. So, only 42 Departments are included in the analysis.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3: Number of P&R Departments with a Facebook and/or Twitter Account

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Using Facebook and/or Twitter</th>
<th>Total Departments</th>
<th>Percentage of Departments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>County P&amp;R Dept.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal P&amp;R Dept.</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 1: Percentage of P&R Departments with Facebook and/or Twitter

Chart 2: Types of Facebook Accounts Employed by P&R Departments
Chart 3: Length of Time Respondent have Used Facebook

Length of Time Using Facebook

- 0 - 6 months: 28.6%
- 7 months - 1 year: 33.3%
- 1 - 2 years: 33.3%
- 2+ years: 4.8%

Chart 4: Length of Time Respondents have Used Twitter

Length of Time Using Twitter

- 0 - 6 months: 14.3%
- 7 months - 1 year: 35.7%
- 1 - 2 years: 42.9%
- 2+ years: 7.1%

Table 4: Relationship Between Length of Time with Facebook and Twitter Usage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How long ago did the Department start using Facebook?</th>
<th>Pearson Correlation</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does the Department or a Division/Program have a Twitter account?</td>
<td>.398**</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The longer a Department had Facebook, the more likely it is to have a Twitter account.
Chart 5: Reasons Respondents Established Social Sites

Table 5: Content that P&R Departments Post on Social Sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Information</th>
<th>Facebook</th>
<th>Twitter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Event Information</td>
<td>88.10%</td>
<td>92.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Information</td>
<td>85.71%</td>
<td>78.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Information</td>
<td>78.57%</td>
<td>64.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and/or Cultural Arts</td>
<td>69.05%</td>
<td>57.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park, Greenways and Facility Information</td>
<td>47.62%</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours of Operation</td>
<td>42.86%</td>
<td>7.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Meetings</td>
<td>35.71%</td>
<td>35.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction Updates</td>
<td>30.95%</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Opportunities</td>
<td>4.76%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Information</td>
<td>2.38%</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Don’t Know</td>
<td>2.38%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>2.38%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Challenges with Social Media Faced by Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Challenge</th>
<th>Number of Depts.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legal implications (1st Amendment, Public Records Law)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of staffing knowledge</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of staffing time</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of funding resources</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased bandwidth consumption</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of control</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productivity Loss</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reputational Damage</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security breach</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chart 6: Frequency that Departments Update Facebook

Frequency of Updating Facebook

- Hourly: 0.0%
- Daily: 28.6%
- Weekly: 42.9%
- Bi-monthly: 4.8%
- Monthly: 4.8%
- I Don’t Know: 16.7%
- Other (please specify): 2.4%

Chart 7: Frequency that Departments Update Twitter

How frequently is Twitter updated?

- Hourly: 21%
- Daily: 29%
- Weekly: 7%
- Bi-monthly: 14%
- Monthly: 7%
- I Don’t Know: 22%

Chart 8: Time Respondents Allocate to Twitter

Time Spent on Twitter a Month

- 0-5 hours: 85.7%
- 6-10 hours: 7.1%
- 11-15 hours: 7.1%
- 16-20 hours: 0%
- 21+ hours: 0%
Chart 9: Assignment of Responsibilities for Facebook

Management of Facebook

Employee

- County or Municipal PIO: 2
- Marketing Coordinator: 2
- Director of P&R: 22
- Assistant Director of P&R: 4
- Supervisor of P&R: 15
- Staff of P&R: 20
- Intern of P&R: 1
- Volunteer: 0

Number of Depts.

Chart 10: Assignment of Twitter Responsibilities

Designated Responsibilities for Twitter

Employee

- County/Municipal PIO: 1
- Director: 4
- Assistant Director: 2
- Supervisor: 6
- Staff: 8
- Intern: 1
- Volunteer: 0

Number of Depts.
### Table 7: P&R Departments with One, Two and Three Employees doing Each Function

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Departments</th>
<th>Supervising Facebook</th>
<th>Posting/Updating Facebook</th>
<th>Supervising Twitter</th>
<th>Posting/Updating Twitter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One Employee</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Employees</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Employees</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 8: Evaluation Methods for Facebook Utilized by Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Evaluation Done</th>
<th>Number of Depts.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Track Activity Only</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze Weekly Reports Only</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up with Citizens Only</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track Activity and Analyze Weekly Reports</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track Activity and Follow-up with citizens</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 9: Respondents’ Use of Third Party System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Third Party System</th>
<th>Number of Depts. Using Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For Facebook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitterfeed</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hootsuite</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another RSS</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use 2 or More Systems</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For Facebook and Twitter, a department that uses 2 or more third party systems is either using Twitterfeed and Hootsuite or Twitterfeed and Another RSS feed.

But as seen through the number of departments that use third party systems, not many departments are taking advantage of these tools.

### Table 10: Relationship Between Size and Third Party System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The P&amp;R does NOT use a third party system.</th>
<th>How many FTEs are in the Parks and Recreation Department?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>-.582**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The larger the department, the more likely it is to use a third party system for Facebook.
Chart 11: Types of Policies Respondents Have in Place

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Policy</th>
<th>Percentage of Departments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>County/City Policy</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department Policy</td>
<td>59.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal Policy</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 12: Length of Time County/Municipal Policy has been Adopted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Time Policy with Adopted Policy</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 6 months</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 months - 1 year</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 2 years</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2+ years</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 11: Common Policy Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Details on Policies</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy for the County/City</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>94.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy for the Department</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopted Policy</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>72.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own Social Media/Network Policy</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item in Policy</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Way an employee should carry him/herself or present info on these sites</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Social Media or examples</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>77.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of Social Media</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>72.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The employees covered by the policy</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restrictions on Employee's Personal Use</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department Managed</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information on the public record and retention laws</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who/how many people supervise and/or maintain the site</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process to Create</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State what information is inappropriate (it can be edited or removed)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The process to edit or remove information or to completely remove a site</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone outside the Department checks the site periodically and/or maintains log-in information</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplinary Action for misuse of the site</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporation into other marketing and communication tools (website)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The types of social sites that can be used</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The frequency in which to check/update the site</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of Facebook accounts allowed</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The types of information that must be posted on the site</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requirement of a business case or proposal to create a site</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy/Guidelines for the Public's Use of these Sites</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement that any social site is second to the website</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create and/or use an evaluation plan or evaluation tools</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restrictions on the Public's abilities with these sites</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steps/Process to fix issues on or with these sites</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declaration to the public that it is a moderated site</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**P&R Social Networking**

1. **Survey Description**

The purpose of this survey is to understand how Parks and Recreation Departments in North Carolina are using Facebook and/or Twitter. This study is specifically targeted to those Parks and Recreation Department that have a Departmental account and to those Departments for which a division and/or program within Parks and Recreation has its own account. The Facebook and/or Twitter account, however, do not have to be managed by the Department itself.

For example, if the Parks and Recreation Department of Sumter or if the Athletics Division of the Sumter Parks and Recreation Department has its own Facebook page (either of which are separate from the Town of Sumter Facebook page), the Department should participate in the study and answer the questions for that account, regardless of whether the Department itself or a county/municipal designee manages the site.

There are approximately 30 questions to this survey. The questions ask about the Department, the Department’s use of Facebook and of Twitter, and general questions about the use of social sites. The survey should take about 10 minutes to complete, based on how much the Department uses Facebook and/or Twitter.

Because of your involvement in this study, I am willing to share the aggregated results and my report with you in May. I will also be available afterward to answer any questions at bamgai@email.unc.edu. If you would like a copy of the report, please make sure to answer the last question.

Thank you so much for your participation!

2. **General Section**

1. What is the jurisdictional name of your Parks and Recreation Department (i.e. Somerset County or Town of Sumter)?

2. How many FTEs (full-time equivalents) are in the Parks and Recreation Department?

3. Does the Department or a Division/Program within Parks and Recreation have a Facebook account that is separate from the jurisdictional account? (The account can be for the entire Department or a division/program within Parks and Recreation.)
   - Yes
   - No
   - I Don’t Know
3. Facebook Section

This section asks questions about the Department's use of Facebook. Remember, these questions pertain to the account(s) for the Department and/or a division/program within the Department that is separate from the jurisdiction's account.

1. What type of Facebook account(s) does the Department have? (Select all that apply)
   - People (Friend)
   - Page (Fan)
   - Group
   - Event
   - I Don’t Know
   - Other (please specify)

2. How long ago did the Department start using Facebook?
   - 0 - 6 months
   - 7 months - 1 year
   - 1 - 2 years
   - 2+ years
   - I Don’t Know

4. Facebook Section cont.

1. Which individuals supervise the Parks and Recreation Facebook account(s)? (For example, who determines what can be posted or who decides what information must be removed?)
   (Select all that apply)
   - County or Municipal Public Information Officer (PIO)/Communications Director
   - Director of Parks and Recreation
   - Assistant Director of Parks and Recreation
   - Supervisor in Parks and Recreation
   - Staff in Parks and Recreation
   - Intern of Parks and Recreation
   - Volunteer
   - I Don’t Know
   - Other (please specify)
2. Which individuals post, modify or update the Parks and Recreation Facebook account(s)? (Select all that apply)

- County or Municipal Public Information Officer (PIO)/Communications Director
- Director of Parks and Recreation
- Assistant Director of Parks and Recreation
- Supervisor in Parks and Recreation
- Staff in Parks and Recreation
- Intern of Parks and Recreation
- Volunteer
- I Don't Know
- Other (please specify)

5. Facebook Section cont.

1. How frequently is Facebook updated? (This includes any time something is posted, changed, updated, etc.)

- Hourly
- Daily
- Weekly
- Bi-monthly
- Monthly
- I Don't Know
- Other (please specify)

2. In total, across all those involved with the Parks and Recreation Facebook account(s), how much time is spent on the Facebook account(s) a month?

- 0-5 hours
- 6-10 hours
- 11-15 hours
- 16-20 hours
- 21+ hours
- I Don't Know
- Other (please specify)
6. Facebook Section cont.

1. What type of information is posted on the Facebook account(s)? (Select all that apply)
   - Arts and/or Cultural Arts
   - Class Information (Pottery Class, Yoga Class, etc)
   - Construction Updates
   - Event Information (Festivals, Celebrations, Tournaments)
   - Hours of Operation
   - Job Opportunities
   - Park, Greenways and Facility Information
   - Policy Information
   - Program Information (Soccer, Swim Team, etc)
   - Public Meetings
   - I Don't Know
   - Other (please specify)

2. If the Department uses a third party system to feed data onto Facebook, which third party system is used? (Select all that apply)
   - Twitterfeed
   - Hootsuite
   - Other RSS
   - None
   - I Don't Know
   - Other (please specify)

3. Does the Department or Division/Program evaluate its success in using Facebook?
   - Yes
   - No
   - I Don't Know

7. Facebook Section cont.

1. What measures does Parks and Recreation employ to evaluate its success in using Facebook?
8. Twitter Section

1. Does the Department or a Division/Program within Parks and Recreation have a Twitter account that is separate from the jurisdictional account? (The account can be for the entire Department or a division/program within Parks and Recreation.)
   - Yes
   - No
   - I Don't Know

9. Twitter Section cont.

This section asks questions about the Department’s use of Twitter. Remember, these questions pertain to the account(s) for the Department and/or a division/program within the Department that is separate from the jurisdiction’s account.

1. How long ago did the Department or Division/Program start using Twitter?
   - 0 - 6 months
   - 7 months - 1 year
   - 1 - 2 years
   - 2+ years
   - I Don’t Know

2. Which individuals supervise the Parks and Recreation Twitter account(s)? (For example, who determines what can be posted or who decides what information should be removed?)
   (Select all that apply)
   - County or Municipal Public Information Officer (PIO)/Communications Director
   - Director of Parks and Recreation
   - Assistant Director of Parks and Recreation
   - Supervisor in Parks and Recreation
   - Staff in Parks and Recreation
   - Intern of Parks and Recreation
   - Volunteer
   - I Don’t Know
   - Other (please specify)
### 3. Which individuals post, update or modify the Parks and Recreation Twitter account(s)? (Select all that apply)

- [ ] County or Municipal Public Information Officer (PIO)/Communications Director
- [ ] Director of Parks and Recreation
- [ ] Assistant Director of Parks and Recreation
- [ ] Supervisor in Parks and Recreation
- [ ] Staff in Parks and Recreation
- [ ] Intern of Parks and Recreation
- [ ] Volunteer
- [ ] I Don't Know
- [ ] Other (please specify):

### 10. Twitter Section cont.

1. How frequently is Twitter updated? (This includes any time something is posted, changed, updated, etc)

- [ ] Hourly
- [ ] Daily
- [ ] Weekly
- [ ] Bi-monthly
- [ ] Monthly
- [ ] I Don't Know
- [ ] Other (please specify):

2. In total, across all those involved with Twitter, how much time is spent on the Parks and Recreation Twitter account(s) a month?

- [ ] 0.5 hours
- [ ] 6-10 hours
- [ ] 11-15 hours
- [ ] 16-20 hours
- [ ] 21+ hours
- [ ] I Don't Know
- [ ] Other (please specify):
11. Twitter Section cont.

1. What type of information is posted on the Parks and Recreation Twitter account(s)? (Select all that apply)
   - Arts and/or Cultural Arts
   - Class Information (Pottery Class, Yoga Class, etc)
   - Construction Updates
   - Event Information (Festivals, Celebrations, Tournaments)
   - Hours of Operation
   - Job Opportunities
   - Park, Greenways and Facility Information
   - Policy Information
   - Program Information (Soccer, Swim Team, etc)
   - Public Meetings
   - I Don’t Know
   - Other (please specify) 

2. If the Department uses a third party system to feed data onto Twitter, which third party system is used? (Select all that apply)
   - TweetDeck
   - Hootsuite
   - Other RSS
   - I Don’t Know
   - None
   - Other (please specify) 

3. Does the Department or Division/Program evaluate its success in using Twitter?
   - Yes
   - No
   - I Don’t Know

12. Twitter Section cont.

1. What measures does the Department or Division/Program employ to evaluate its success in using Twitter?
13. General Questions on Use

This section asks questions about the Department’s use of social sites in general. Remember, these questions pertain to the Department’s use that is separate from the jurisdiction’s use.

1. What reason(s) did the Department and/or Divisions within Parks and Recreation consider when deciding to use social networks? (Select all that apply)
   - Communicating/Engaging citizens
   - Marketing Programs and Services
   - Networking
   - Recruiting and Hiring
   - Updating on Emergency Situations
   - I Don’t Know
   - Other (please specify)

2. Have people in the organization reported any of the following challenges in using these social sites? (Select all that apply)
   - Increased bandwidth consumption
   - Lack of staffing knowledge
   - Lack of staffing time
   - Lack of funding resources
   - Legal implications (1st Amendment, Public Records Law)
   - Loss of control
   - Productivity Loss
   - Reputational Damage
   - Security breach
   - I Don’t Know
   - Other (please specify)

14. General Questions

1. Does the county/municipality have a documented social media policy?
   - Yes
   - No
   - I Don’t Know
15. General Questions

1. How long ago did the county/municipality adopt the social media policy?
   - 0 - 6 months
   - 7 months - 1 year
   - 1 - 2 years
   - 2+ years
   - I Don't Know

2. Does the Department have a documented social media policy, specific for the Parks and Recreation Department?
   - Yes
   - No
   - I Don't Know

16. General Questions

1. How long ago did the Parks and Recreation Department adopt the specific Parks and Recreation social media policy?
   - 0 - 6 months
   - 7 months - 1 year
   - 1 - 2 years
   - 2+ years
   - I Don't Know

2. Does the Department have an informal social media policy for the Department's use of social sites?
   - Yes
   - No
   - I Don't Know

17. Thank you

Thank you so much for your participation. Your involvement in this study will help produce accurate and thorough results. Please answer the final question below and hit "done" so that your results will be submitted.

Thank you once again!

1. Would you like to receive a copy of the aggregated results and report?
   - Yes
   - No
Acknowledgements
The author would like to acknowledge her Capstone advisory committee – Maureen Berner, Shannon Tufts and Lynn Setzer. These faculty members provided valuable insight and feedback. Chairperson, Maureen Berner, who has extensive experience with survey methodology and research methods, contributed tremendously to the development of the research proposal and formation of the survey. Shannon Tufts, with her in depth knowledge of social media, provided valuable advice about the type of data that should be collected and assisted with the data analysis. And Lynn Setzer, who has worked as a communication consultant and lecturer, offered critical insight into the development and presentation of this report. These faculty members were essential to the success of this research.

Additionally, the author would like to recognize each North Carolina Parks and Recreation Department and Parks and Recreation staff member that participated in this study. Without their involvement and input, these results would not be as comprehensive, accurate or representative. Thank you very much!
Bibliography


http://hootsuite.com/


