

## Government Use of Social Media

Yael Bar tur

*Digital Strategist, NYPD*

- Ignoring social media is not an option. The growth and spread is far too wide. Some Youtube channels have more subscribers than the daily circulation of all major US newspapers.
- News is broken on social media minutes, even hours, before traditional media.
- However, being on it is not enough – you need to be great at it!
- Why is it so hard for Government?
  - Requires a cultural shift towards transparency, conversation, two way communications.
  - Social media moves quickly – government does not.
  - Informality dangerous.
  - Invitation for criticism.
- What does it take to be great?
  - Engage – social media should be a means for conversation.
  - Be human.
  - Timing is everything – trending conversations have a short lifespan, if you want to take advantage of something “viral” you need to move fast.
  - Content is key – be interesting, find your niche.
  - Emergencies will make you or break you – during emergencies people will flock to the relevant Twitter account. Keep them informed.
  - Know your audience – each social media channel has a different language and culture.
  - Be funny!
  - Train your practitioners – the NYPD trains all commanding officers to operate their own Twitter accounts.
  - Determine which channels you need to be on – just because something exists doesn’t mean you need to be on it.
  - Incorporate social media into your organizational strategy. Ask yourself what your goals are as an organization and incorporate them into your communications.
  - Spread one message through many voices – if you have a large organization, go local and use the voices of different representatives in your org. The NYPD has over 100 local Twitter accounts!
- Don’t:
  - Don’t feed the trolls. Internet arguments rarely have positive outcomes.
  - Stray too far outside the lines – innovation, humor and a casual tone are great, but do not say anything you wouldn’t say in any other public setting. Before you post ask yourself what the worst possible outcome could be and determine whether the risk is worth it.
  - Don’t compromise the safety of your organization. Safety of operations and personnel takes precedent to communications.