Office of Student Life

Social Media Best Practices

Last updated: 5/22/24

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF STUDENT LIFE

Table of Contents

Introduction

Social media can be an extremely effective way to engage and communicate with our audiences, especially students. As with most things, there are tactics and strategies that are proven to work. Success with social media depends on using the medium properly. This document contains best practices, industry standards and university rules to follow that will help ensure the best possible outcomes for your efforts.

Here are some high-level best practices to follow in your social media accounts:

- **Post at least every week on all platforms, all year round.** Engagement will suffer with lower frequency or if you only post around your major events.

- **The account manager is responsible for all content.** Every post, including those submitted by students, must be carefully vetted for appropriateness, tone, typos and university brand compliance.

- **Use only graphics provided by Student Life.** You are not permitted to create, alter or use any other graphics.

- **Use high quality media.** Use photos/ videos in the correct resolution, size and format for each social channel. Edit photos/video to create vibrant content. This results in better quality and clarity of the image and allows for use of accessibility features.

- **Stay connected to the Student Life social media team.** All social media managers are to join Student Life Social Media Community for direct contact with the Digital/Social Communications Coordinator, Marketing Specialist and other Student Life social media managers.

- **Know and follow** the university's Social Media Policy.

More detailed information is contained in the following pages. Following these best practices will provide the best opportunity for successfully engaging our audiences.

General Best Practices

Social Media Strategy

Contact the Student Life Digital Communications Coordinator for help with creating a social media strategy for the account(s). **A social media strategy template example can be found here.**

Capacity

- Check social media channels daily to keep up with interactions including responding to messages and comments and tracking content engagement.

- Maintain ability to respond to urgent issues on a 24/7 basis.

- Ensure social activity is maintained in absence of the social media manager by planning ahead using a social media content calendar.

- In all cases, the social media manager must closely review and approve student-created content for appropriateness, tone, typos and university brand compliance.

- Post, at minimum, weekly year-round as per university policy.

Student Staff

All student-created content must be approved and scheduled by a staff member.

Crisis Communication

- During crisis or emergency, refer to the Student Life Social Media teams group for instruction from the Student Life Digital Communications Coordinator.

- Never post about a university, local or global crisis unless specifically asked to do so.

New Accounts

The Student Life Digital Communications Coordinator must sign off on any request for a new account. Final approval is handled by the university's Office of Marketing and Communications.

Account Management

- The Student Life Digital Communications Coordinator maintains a list of account login information to prevent account lockouts. Ensure the information on file is accurate and up to date.

- At least two department members, including at least one professional staff member, must have access to each account. The Student Life Digital Communications Coordinator shall also have access.

- Like and respond to positive feedback within 24 hours. Post engagement boosts visibility.
- Report negative comments/feedback that requires attention to your Marketing Specialist and Student Life Digital Communications Coordinator.
- Report spam comments and messages using the reporting tools on each social channel.

Security

- Change passwords no less than every six months or with account management changes.
- Notify the Marketing Specialist and The Student Life Digital Communications Coordinator of password changes.

Account Audits

All accounts are audited yearly for posting consistency, Ohio State brand guideline adherence and social media strategy reevaluation.

Platforms

- All account names should include a variation of The Ohio State University or Ohio State.
  - Ex: The Ohio State University Alumni Association
  - Ex: Ohio State Football
  - Ex: Health Sciences Library at Ohio State
  - Ex: Dennis Learning Center at The Ohio State University
- Keep social media profiles regularly updated and engaging.
- Each platform has its own analytics tool that provides data about targeted Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

Photos

- Photos should be vibrant and engaging. Photos showing people conveying active emotions do better on all platforms
- Ideal photos have a clear subject focus and good lighting.
- If necessary, use photo editing software, usually located within the platform, to adjust photo appearance ensuring that photos are clear, bright and saturated with color.

Graphics

- Use graphics created by the Student Life graphic design team **without alterations**. Use of any other graphics is **not permitted**.
- Submit graphic requests to the marketing specialist at least four weeks in advance for a first draft **using the Marketing Request Form.**

- Do not post scannable graphics (I.e. barcodes, QR codes) on social channels.
- Use graphics specifically designed by Student Life Marketing for specific social media platforms. Art designed for other purposes, such as screens, posters or flyers, will not be effective.
- Know the specific requirements for each social media platform. See below for detailed information for Instagram, LinkedIn etc.

Captions

- Check for content typos and accuracy.
- Use hashtags from the **Ohio State Hashtags list**. Limit hashtags to one per post, two if necessary.
- Use the **University Style Cheat Sheet** as a guide for writing copy.

Posting

- All posts must be thoroughly reviewed and approved by the staff member designated as account manager.
- Tag/Collaborate with relevant departments and units.
- Engage with content before posting to boost reach.
- Refer to the **2024 Sprout Social Guide** for best times to post on the different platforms.

Scheduling

Utilize scheduling tools for content. **Two free scheduling options can be found in a separate document linked here.**

Accessibility

- Add alternative text (alt text) to all content, where applicable. Use descriptive words to convey the visual context and meaning of the content.
- Keep emojis and hashtags to a minimum. If used, placed at the end of the post.
- Ensure all video content has captions.

Tone

Maintain a professional and respectful tone. Each post and interaction are a representation of the university.

Student Life Social Media Onboarding

Newly hired or designated account managers and new account owners should adhere to the following guidelines to successfully create and manage Ohio State Student Life social media accounts.

• Following onboarding and required institutional data training, the existing account owner may provide log-in and password information to the new hire.

• Review the social media policy and standards. See the Resources section at the end of this document.

• Manage current contact information for other account users, updating as needed, and provide the list to the Student Life Digital Communications Coordinator.

• Review brand guidelines and resources on **brand.osu.edu**.

• Review information and resources on the Social Media Community of Practice website: **omc.osu.edu/communities/social-media-community**

• The Student Life Digital Communications Coordinator will have the new hires added to the university's Social Media Community of Practice group.

Instagram

There are three primary features on Instagram used by Ohio State accounts: the feed where static photos and reels are found in a timeline format; the reels feed where users can scroll though only reels; and stories located at the top of the timeline.

Key Instagram Features for Ohio State Accounts:

Feed: the hub for static photos and reels, displayed in a timeline format.

Reels Feed: Exclusively showcases reels and stories, located at the top of the timeline.

Posting

- Only post on the feed once a day with occasional stories throughout the day, or every couple of days.

- To increase **engagement**, interact with content on the timeline before posting.

Timeline

- The default algorithm prioritizes posts-based user activity, occasionally displaying older posts at the top.

- Users can switch to chronological order by selecting "Following" under the Instagram dropdown.

Captions

- Never post hyperlinks in IG captions. Instead use a link tool, such as Linktree. Linktree can be used to store multiple links.

- For posts with links, prompt users with "link in our bio!" to redirect users to where they can find the information.

Accessibility

Add alternative text to photos that briefly describe the image.

Media

- Use one or multiple high-quality images for photo posts.

- Carousels (multi-image posts) are on average the most engaging.

Graphics

- Graphics should primarily be used for IG Stories. IG posts should use photos.

- Graphics generally should not be used for non-Stories IG posts and only after consultation with Marketing and the Digital Media Coordinator. If deemed necessary, graphics should only appear in a carousel after photo slides – with only the name of the event and date included.

- **All** graphics should be created by the Student Life Graphic Design team.
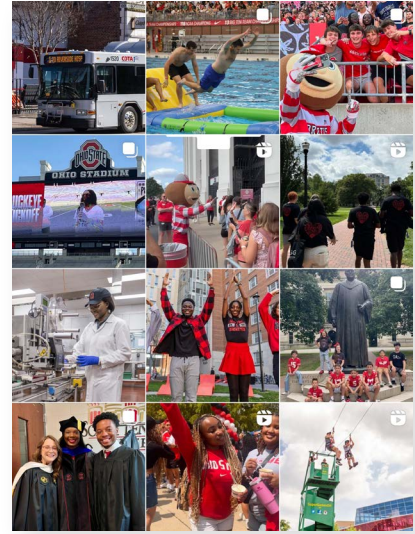
Reels

- Reels are Instagram's video content which perform best at 7 -15 seconds. Try not to exceed 30 seconds.

- All videos with someone talking to a camera should have accessible captions.

- Sounds should not be uploaded with videos unless they are copyright free. **This can risk having the account shut down.**

- To find sounds, scroll through the feed to find and save sounds for future use. When creating reels, go into saved sounds and edit the video from there.

Stories

- This is a great way to reshare content your account is tagged, engage with users through polls, heart-eyes sliders and other features.

- Graphics from the Student Life Graphic Design team are great for IG stories. Reels about upcoming events or important information should include a link to the corresponding webpage, if applicable.

- IG stories can include the date, time and location with a link sticker laid over the image.

Twitter/X

Ohio State X accounts, formerly known as Twitter, are platforms used to share information, event details, and photos.

General Platform Information

- For optimal engagement, plan to tweet at least 1-2 times daily, up to 3-5 times max.

- Scheduling tweets strategically allows space for sharing other Student Life content through Retweets and Quote Tweets.

Tweets

Keep your tweet copy brief and concise, utilizing emojis and a conversational tone.

Media

Media like graphics, photos, links and short video (<2 minutes) boost visibility.

Accessibility

Provide alternate text to ensure accessibility. Write out all text on graphics and describe photos to the best of your ability.

Quote Tweets

QT's amplify content already posted while allowing you to reshare the tweet with copy that is to your department.

Timeline

The timeline is displayed chronologically, making it a good platform for live coverage.
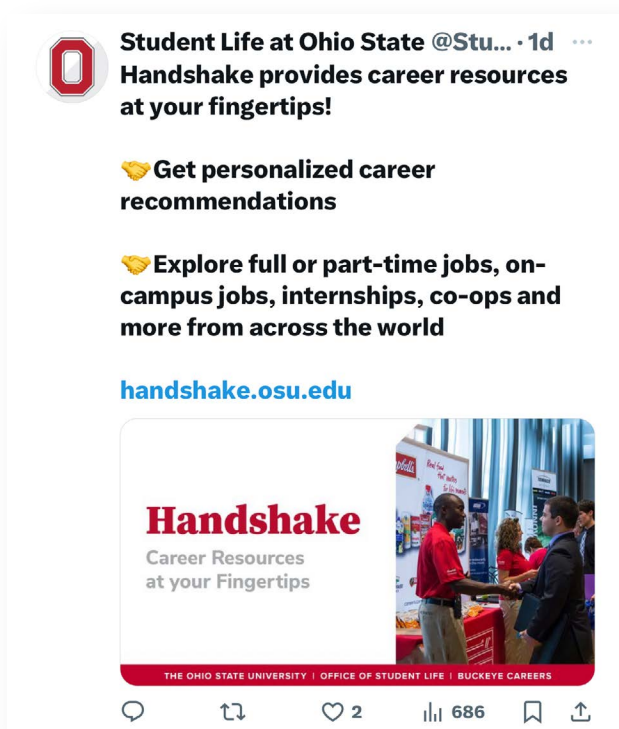
Facebook

Facebook is a platform that allows Student Life accounts to boost community engagement through posts that encourage admissions, networking, event promotion and support services on department pages.

Meta Business Suite

- Facebook operates Meta Business Suite, which allows users to connect their Instagram and Facebook pages.

- Within the Meta Business Suite, users can schedule and post both Facebook and Instagram content.

Scheduling

- Don't schedule the same post for both Facebook and Instagram; always modify your caption for the platform.

- Schedule posts individually regardless of the scheduler you're using.

Account Access

- Requires users to have a personal Facebook page.

- Users must be added as an administrator or editor to post through Facebook pages.

Posts

- It is recommended to post no more than one post a day on Facebook.

- Caption length can vary based on the post goal and your audience.

- Long-form posts have performed well on Facebook.

Videos

- Reels (vertical video) are popular on Facebook.

- Horizontal videos can still be shared within posts and are preferred over links to YouTube.

Messages

- Facebook tracks and publicizes page response time to messages.

- Regularly check and respond to make messages especially in the inbox.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a platform used to find jobs and internships, stay informed about different industries, celebrate workplace accomplishments and keep connected with professional contacts.

Usage

Departments should only have a LinkedIn profile if they specifically focus on career and internship opportunities or frequently work on professional development.

General Platform Information

- It's recommended to post once per day, max 2-5 times a week.

- Fill out all relevant information on the page, including a call-to-action button that leads back to a website.

Posts

- Posts with images tend to perform better on LinkedIn.

- Both shortform and longform captions can perform well depending on the content.
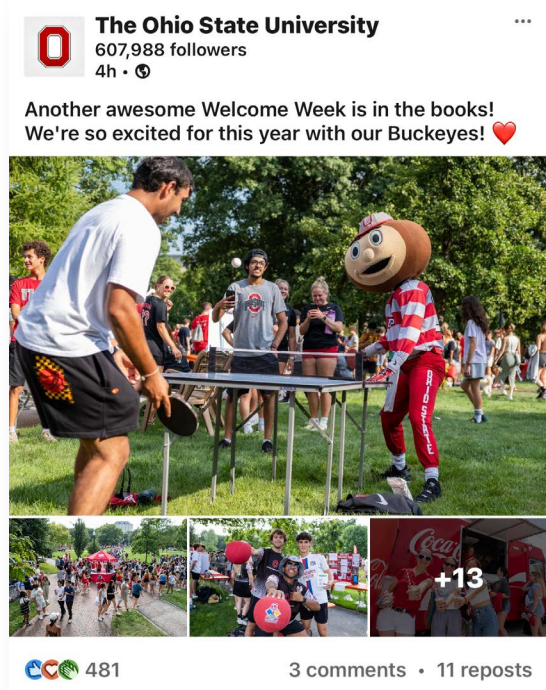
Office of Student Life Resources

Office of Student Life Marcomm: **Marketing and Communications Team**

University Policy: **Ohio State Policy for Institutional Social Media Accounts**

Social Media Strategic Plan: **SL Social Media Strategic Plan Template**

Branding: **Marketing Request Form** and **Brand Guidelines**

Editorial Style: **University Style Guide Cheat Sheet** and **AP Stylebook**

Hashtags: **Ohio State Hashtags**

Microsoft Team: **Student Life Social Media Community**

Photos: **The DAM**, for additional photo help, reach out to your marketing specialist

Additional Social Media Guide: **2024 Sprout Social Guide**