

AIR FORCE PUBLIC AFFAIRS AGENCY  
SOCIAL MEDIA DIVISION

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# Navigating the Social Network

The Air Force Guide to Effective Social Media Use



Air Force Public Affairs Agency

AFPAA/PA

2261 Hughes Ave, Ste 157

Lackland AFB, TX 78236-9853

(210) 395-1794

[afpaa.hq.socialmedia@us.af.mil](mailto:afpaa.hq.socialmedia@us.af.mil)

<http://www.facebook.com/USairforce>

<http://www.youtube.com/afbluetube>

<http://www.flickr.com/usairforce>

<http://www.twitter.com/usairforce>

<http://www.airforcelive.dodlive.mil>



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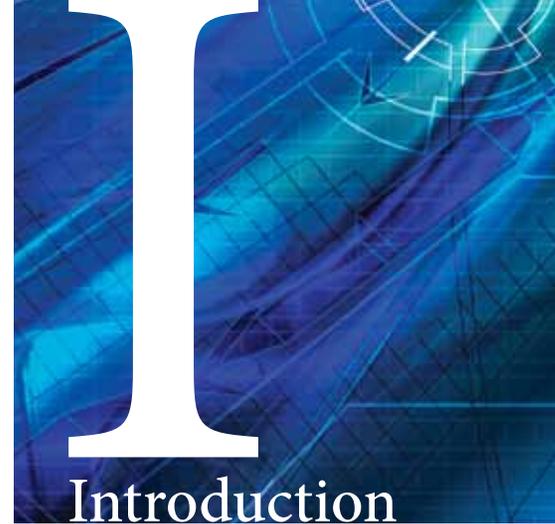
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AFPAA/PA  
2261 Hughes Ave, Ste 157  
Lackland AFB, TX 78236-9853  
(210) 395-1794  
afpaa.hq.socialmedia@us.af.mil

Tanya Schusler, Chief of Social Media  
Tech. Sgt. Karen Tomasik, Noncommissioned Officer  
in Charge of Social Media  
Airman 1st Class Krystal Tomlin, Social Media  
Journalist  
Airman 1st Class Christopher Gere, Social Media  
Broadcast Journalist

Designed by  
Billy Smallwood, Visual Information Specialist

# SOCIAL MEDIA



With the emergence of social media, information sharing continues to be dynamic and evolving. Social media is a global cultural phenomenon, and for many Americans it has become such a part of their daily activities they can't imagine living without Facebook or Twitter. According to comScore, a digital measurement company, one out of every six minutes spent online is on a social network, and 73 percent of the U.S. Internet population visits Facebook each month. Social media is not only a great avenue for staying connected with family and friends; it is also a great tool for sharing the overall Air Force story and the stories of our Airmen.

The Air Force Public Affairs Agency created this guide to help all Airmen safely and wisely use social media. This guide provides simple, easy-to-follow tips to help you use social media tools in your professional and personal life. This guide is for informational purposes only and does not replace official Air Force instructions.

If you would like more information about using social media tools, contact the Social Media Division at the Air Force Public Affairs Agency (AFPAA) at [afpaa.hq.socialmedia@us.af.mil](mailto:afpaa.hq.socialmedia@us.af.mil) or by calling (210) 395-1794; DSN 969-1794.

## *The Power of Social Media*

In August 2011, the U.S. Air Forces Central Command band, "Sidewinder," performed Adele's song "Rolling in the Deep" for a group of deployed Airmen. An Airman captured the acoustic set on his mobile phone and Tweeted the video. Within hours, the video went viral.

Lead singer Staff Sgt. Angie Johnson and the band received thousands of positive comments. Many news organizations covered the story and featured the band on their television shows. Practically overnight, many people discovered two things: the Air Force has bands, and they are good.

## Increasing the Reach of Your Story

In May 2011, a Las Vegas news station covered the U.S. Air Force Weapons School at Nellis Air Force Base. The news station, reporter and Nellis AFB all cross-promoted various products (stories, blog posts and video) using their social media properties. This cross-promotion increased the potential viewership of the weapons school information.



## Social Media for Airmen and Their Families

### Airmen

In general, the Air Force views personal social media sites positively and respects your rights as Americans to use them to express yourself. However, by the nature of your profession, you are always on the record and must represent our core values. When you engage via social media, don't do anything that will discredit yourself or the Air Force. Use your best judgment because your writing can have serious consequences. Remember that you are always on duty and your social media interactions are subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Also, don't forget your operations security (OPSEC) considerations.

Consider how a post can be interpreted by the public. Be cautious about crossing the line between funny and distasteful. If you have doubts about whether you should post something, err on the side of caution. If the post in question concerns the Air Force, discuss the proposed post with your supervisor or your local PA office. Ultimately, you alone are responsible for what you post.



## Airmen and Families

Don't give criminals a chance to get your information. Be careful of the personal details, photos and videos you post to your profile on social networks. It's highly recommended that you set privacy settings so that only "friends" can see specifics. Even after establishing privacy settings, don't assume your information will remain private; there's no guarantee. Always use common sense: For example, don't inform potential criminals you're going out of town!

It's a good idea to always operate under the assumption that anything you post online might be stolen by criminals or adversaries. Social content shared by Airmen and families is a major target for those looking to impersonate them to gain access to sensitive information, blackmail or intimidate. While there is a definite benefit to using social media to help with support networks, be wary of posting detailed information about support groups. Posting unclassified sensitive information could be just as dangerous as posting classified information.

You may also want to keep in mind future career opportunities. Potential employers search social media sites. Your inappropriate photos or comments could cost you a job. Consider occasionally performing Internet searches on yourself and your family members to see what information is publicly available. There are databases that continually archive social networking websites and public records. Even if a profile was deleted, it's very possible it will still be stored in a database online. These databases often include an option to delete personal information if you send an email request.

Corporate policies are taken seriously on social media sites, so read through a site's terms of service before clicking "accept" to start an account. Inappropriate posting and copyright infringement are two of the most serious infractions. Keep in mind, these policies are not written to restrict postings; rather, they are written to protect and help keep you out of trouble.

Airmen and their families need to practice operations security (OPSEC) in all social media activities. See the Security section in this guide for more information.



# Social Media *for Leaders*

Because social media allows information to spread quickly through global audiences, it's understandable that some Airmen may be wary of its use in an official capacity. However, educating yourself on the capabilities of social media platforms will help your organization become more effective in using them to communicate with key audiences.

## *How Can Social Media Help Leaders?*

Social media is a quick way to communicate to your Airmen, your stakeholders, the media, families, the local community and the American public with information on events and issues that affect them. Using social media can help bridge the gap for people who aren't in close proximity to an installation or know very little about the military.

Social media is incredibly dynamic and engages people in a way that feels informal, real and transparent. It affords leaders the opportunity to connect with others on a personal level. By its very nature, social media allows everyone to have a role in shaping conversations.

Social media is only one of the tools in your public affairs communication toolbox, which includes your base website, base newspaper, email and commander's calls. Each tool should provide unique, complementary information to support your priorities. Identify the audience you want to reach and the message you want to convey, and then determine which social media platform(s) will most effectively reach that audience. See the Common Social Media Platform section for more in-depth descriptions of social media platforms or page 18 for a quick reference chart. Regardless of which social media platforms are used to help communicate to key audiences, they should be supplemented by other tools to meet overall communication goals.

Consider scope. The communication strategy and corresponding communication tools a major command uses will be different from wing-level units. Use a tailored approach to balance the needs of senior leaders with the needs of key audiences. Remember that social media is not just for pushing information – share interesting content and engage frequently.

## *Social Media Use*

When using social media in an official capacity, it's important to be honest about who is posting information on behalf of senior leaders.

If you're using social media to keep in touch with family and friends, it might not make sense to allow subordinates access to your personal accounts. If your personal social media accounts are publicly viewable and show your Air Force affiliation, you must consider what your photos, videos, posts and comments say about you, your values and beliefs and your Air Force image.

As leaders, keep in mind that if your Airmen violate regulations, policy or the UCMJ, you'll need to deal with the situation appropriately.

## *Do's and Don'ts of Social Media for Leaders*

- Do listen to your followers and engage as necessary.
- Do be honest about who is maintaining a social media site.
- Do keep your interactions conversational and informal, yet professional.
- Do consider your public image when using social media professionally and personally.
- Do pick the right communication tools for your audiences.
- Don't rely on social media alone to communicate your messages.
- Don't stifle conversations. If a comment or post doesn't hurt anyone and doesn't violate your comment policy, don't delete it.
- Don't be afraid of negative comments or opinions. It's just feedback and a potential opportunity to educate people about a topic.

# Social Media Considerations

## Once it's out there, it's gone forever

- Once you post something on social media, you can't "get it back." Even deleting the post doesn't mean it's truly gone, so consider carefully before you hit enter.

## No classified information

- Don't post classified or sensitive information (for example, troop movement, force size, weapons details, etc.). If in doubt, talk to your supervisor or security manager. "Think OPSEC!"

## Replace error with fact, not argument

- When you see misrepresentations made about the Air Force in social media, you may certainly use your social media property or someone else's to correct the error. Always do so with respect and with the facts. When you speak to someone who has an adversarial position, make sure what you say is factual and respectful. No arguments, just correct the record.

## Admit mistakes

- Be the first to respond to your own mistakes. If you make an error, be up front about your mistake and correct it quickly. If you choose to modify an earlier post, make it clear you have done so (e.g., use the strikethrough function).

## Use your best judgment

- What you write may have serious consequences. If you're unsure about a post, discuss your proposed post with your supervisor. Ultimately, you bear sole responsibility for what you post.

## Avoid the offensive

- Don't post any defamatory, libelous, vulgar, obscene, abusive, profane, threatening, racially and ethnically hateful or otherwise offensive or illegal information or material.

## Don't violate copyright

- Don't post any information or other material protected by copyright without the permission of the copyright owner.

## Don't misuse trademarks

- Don't use any words, logos or other marks that would infringe upon the trade mark, service mark, certification mark or other intellectual property rights of the owners of such marks without owner permission.

## Don't violate privacy

- Don't post any information that would infringe upon the proprietary, privacy or personal rights of others.

## No endorsements

- Don't use the Air Force name to endorse or promote products, political positions or religious ideologies.

## No impersonations

- Don't manipulate identifiers in your post in an attempt to disguise, impersonate or otherwise misrepresent your identity or affiliation with any other person or entity.

## Use disclaimers

- Official Air Force social media properties must have a disclaimer such as: "The appearance of external links on this site doesn't constitute official endorsement on behalf of the U.S. Air Force or Department of Defense."
- State that the views expressed are yours alone and don't necessarily reflect the views of the Air Force. For example, "The postings on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent Air Force positions, strategies or opinions."

## Link

- You may provide a link to an Air Force website from your account.
- Organizational pages may also link to external, non-military websites that are relevant to the organization and mission. Again, include a disclaimer.

## Adhere to federal law, Department of Defense directives and instructions, Air Force instructions, and the UCMJ

- You must keep federal law, Department of Defense directives and instructions, Air Force instructions and the UCMJ in mind when using social media in official and unofficial capacities. As an Airman, you are on duty 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

## Be aware of the image you present

- Any time you engage in social media, you're representing the Air Force. Don't do anything that discredits you or our Service.

## Stay in your lane

- Discussing issues related to your career field or personal experiences are acceptable and encouraged, but you shouldn't discuss areas of expertise where you have no firsthand, direct experience or knowledge.

## Be cautious with the information you share

- Be careful about the personal details you share on the Internet. Maintain privacy settings on your social media accounts, change your passwords regularly and don't give out personally identifiable information. Also, be mindful of who you allow to access your social media accounts.

## Don't promote yourself for personal or financial gain

- Don't use your Air Force affiliation, official title or position to promote, endorse or benefit yourself or any profit-making group or agency. For details, refer to Code of Federal Regulations, Title 5, Volume 3, sec. 2635.702, *Use of Public Office for Private Gain*, in the Joint Ethics Regulation or Air Force Instruction 35-101, *Public Affairs Responsibilities and Management*.

## Follow the terms of service set by each social media site

- Become familiar with each social media site's terms of service and follow them. For example, Facebook will not permit you to have more than one personal profile. If a personal profile is being used for your organization, it can be taken down without notice. Your unit needs to create a Facebook page for the organization, not a profile.

## Don't be a bandwidth hog

- After you finish working on a social media site, please log off. Help us preserve military bandwidth usage.

# Security

## Operations Security

The primary concern for Airmen using social media is maintaining operations security. Information moves and evolves quickly via social media, which means OPSEC awareness is more important than ever before. Make sure you understand the risks and communicate them to other Airmen. Information about social media awareness is provided in annual computer-based training.



Review all content (photos, videos, links to articles, etc.) for OPSEC violations prior to posting. Remember to take a holistic approach when evaluating whether or not your content violates OPSEC. Don't provide adversaries any advantage by posting classified, controlled unclassified information or sensitive information (for example, troop movements, force size, weapons details, etc.). When compiled, such details can potentially cost the lives of your fellow Airmen or jeopardize missions.

*When clicking on links to official military or government sites, double-check the URL is a .mil or .gov address and pay close attention to information contained on the site. If you aren't paying attention and visit a spoofed site, you open yourself up to phishing and malware set up by hackers.*

## **This Checklist Can Help Ensure OPSEC Is Maintained**

- Ensure OPSEC training is current.
- Make sure social media content is reviewed and approved.
- Make sure your content follows your organization's public affairs guidance.
- Monitor your social media properties to make sure fans have not posted OPSEC-violating material.
- Make sure your social media administrators are trained on OPSEC.
- Help fellow Airmen and their families understand the dangers of revealing OPSEC information.

## Geotagging

If you're using smartphones or tablets to take pictures and access social networking sites, you or your family could be inadvertently posting the exact geographic location of your home, workplace or even daily travel patterns. This technology is known as geotagging. Many phones, tablets and digital cameras are set up to geotag by default. If deployed and using your phone or digital media devices in this capacity, you must disable this function. You may want to consider turning it off for home use.

## Impersonations and Criminal Usage of Online Information

The Air Force Office of Special Investigations has seen an uptick in the number of senior leaders impersonated online. These individuals are particularly susceptible to online impersonation. Their leadership role in the military generally means personal and professional information is abundant and readily available. Their institutional and social stature also provides cybercriminals with the reputability and plausibility necessary to make these online scams appear credible.



Although impersonation can easily be used to facilitate criminal activity, the mere act of online impersonation does not in itself constitute a crime, and law enforcement authority is limited. Despite the fact that they are seldom victims of scams themselves, senior leaders should remain vigilant against these types of online activities and report any improprieties regarding their personal information to appropriate authorities.

AFOSI provided the following case studies. Specific details were modified to protect ongoing investigations and operations, but the information can still help you use social media sites safely.

- In 2010, a cybercriminal assumed the identity of a DoD general officer in an effort to perpetrate an online romance scam. Using a high-ranking Air Force officer's public online information (including photograph, name and biographical information), the perpetrator created fake social networking profiles to interact with potential victims. One female victim lost more than \$5,000.
- In 2010, a criminal network told its affiliates to use open source information found online to target Air Force officers and their families. The criminals recommended pulling geographic coordinates from the metadata of pictures posted online and using Google Maps to find the home addresses of the officers, as well as social networking site information to gather personal information about the victims. The criminals then recommended their affiliates use the information to blackmail both the Air Force officers and their families.

Several resources are available for victims of online impersonation such as the Internet Crime Complaint Center, [www.ic3.gov](http://www.ic3.gov), and the help pages of social networking sites.

# Common Social Media Platforms

It can be difficult to keep up with the social media realm because it seems that a new social media platform like Storify or Pinterest is born every day. This section covers some of the most commonly used social media platforms in the Air Force.



Facebook is a free social networking site that allows users to post updates about themselves, commentaries on issues important to them and share links, photos and videos with friends. Interacting with users is an important part of the platform.

## Anatomy of an Effective Facebook Post

- Photos, video or a link to content that's appropriate for the audience or a short, relevant and interesting status message.
- Short, professional and conversational text to accompany and tease content. No need for a long paragraph.
- Eye-catching thumbnail.
- Relevant tag to another page if appropriate.

## Organizational Facebook Page Considerations

1. Develop a strategy before creating your Facebook page.
2. Identify the types of content you will post.
3. Consider interests and preferences for obtaining and retaining followers.
4. Ensure information posted is approved for public release; remember security (e.g., OPSEC), accuracy, propriety and policy (e.g., Privacy Act considerations).
5. Listen to your fans and plan for feedback.
6. Have a legal contact on stand-by as situations arise.
7. Track metrics and conduct analysis. Use this information to modify your strategy.

## Organizational Facebook Page Security

- Designate at least two administrators who will have to use their personal Facebook profiles to become administrators of the organizational page. **Don't** create a fake profile to create your page.
- Create a comment policy and display it on your page. See the United States Air Force Facebook page for an example.

- Define the page's rules of engagement for Airmen. Consider reminding Airmen to use the chain of command for issues or problems, not the Facebook page.
- Post an external links disclaimer.
- Review comments regularly, and delete comments if they violate your comment policy or Facebook's terms of service.
- Will you allow posts from fans? Pictures? Videos? If so, you'll have more content to review.
- Will someone be responsible for reviewing comments after hours?

## What to Post on Your Facebook Page

- Create a unique experience for your followers by offering a mixture of content.
- Create online events to get more participation such as a Q&A session, factoid of the day, tip of the day, etc. Ask people to send in content. Be as creative as you want.
- Occasionally, ask general questions of fans or offer a call-to-action in your posts to encourage participation.
- Tag related pages as appropriate.
- Send content to the AFPAA Social Media team for consideration.
- Use a URL shortener to track metrics. Some examples are tiny.cc, tinyurl.com, etc.

## How to Interact on Facebook

- Be conversational and informal. Most of all, be fun.
- Be authentic. Presentation, content, style and tone are important.
- Followers want to be in the know. We can provide people with the right information by communicating relevant material with edge and punch so it's memorable. The facts alone won't always cut it.
- Give both the bad and good news. You'll be respected more.
- Look at events through social media lenses. While you're looking at an event from the traditional public affairs perspective, also think about how you can create a special experience for social media users.
- Actively monitor comments and posts and respond to them. Most answers are already on [www.af.mil](http://www.af.mil) or [www.airforce.com](http://www.airforce.com), so point followers to the right place.
- Consider using your initials on posts. This not only enhances accountability, but it also helps followers connect with the way each person writes. It's a little detail that adds extra personality.

## Tips for a Successful Organizational Facebook Page

- Choose the government category for your page.
- Your profile photo should incorporate your unit shield to make your page look official. Carefully consider choosing an interesting cover photo.
  - Update your profile and cover photos periodically.
- Complete your timeline with appropriate milestones.

- Shoot for at least one post daily Mondays through Fridays at a minimum. Consider posting on weekends too. Space out your posts to allow ample time for your content to get attention and to avoid annoying your followers. Only you will know what your key audience needs.
- Engage with followers on a timely basis.



Twitter is a microblogging site that revolves around 140-character long posts called tweets. Twitter users communicate status updates, share links to content and post photos and videos for their followers. Twitter users who want to share another user's tweet may retweet (commonly seen as RT) it to their followers, which makes it important to write tweets no longer than 120 characters, so they can be retweeted easily. Twitter users who follow one another may send direct messages (commonly seen as DM) to communicate more privately.

Photos and videos are popular tweets, and hashtags and mentions are vital components of Twitter. A hashtag is a word or phrase with the “#” sign in front of it (e.g., #airforce or #Airman). Users can follow specific events, communities, topics or items by following a specific hashtag. You can mention another Twitter account with an “@” prefix (e.g., @usairforce or @usafpressdesk).

Twitter is useful for quickly sending out updates in crisis situations or sharing important information with followers. It doesn't work exactly like Facebook though. While only one to a few posts per day are recommended for Facebook, your Twitter handle should have more tweets.

### *The Anatomy of an Effective Tweet*

- Short, descriptive and conversational text
- Shortened URL
- A couple of relevant hashtags
- Appropriate mentions
- Properly identify the type of tweet (e.g., retweet, modified retweet)

*While URL shortening services are valuable tools for sharing links on platforms like Twitter, they are vulnerable to phishing and viruses. Services using generic top-level domains (like those ending in .com, .net, .org, etc.) are recommended for use rather than domains owned by foreign national governments.*

### *Organizational Twitter Considerations*

- Have a short external links disclaimer posted.
- Plan to spend a couple of hours per day to tweet and follow activity.
- Follow relevant accounts (to your organization) and general news. Don't just follow everyone who chooses to follow you; be selective and choose those who regularly tweet about you or provide you with useful information rather than someone who posts something once a year about you.
- Customize the look of your page, but pick something that will look good on various monitors. Designs too close to the feed might be cut off depending on screen resolution.
- In your background description, be concise, yet descriptive with the limited room you have.
- Choose hashtags wisely. You can use existing ones or create your own. Create a unique hashtag for specific events, so you'll be able to follow the chatter about it.
- Tools like Hootsuite and Tweetdeck can help you track mentions, hashtags, retweets and other information.
- Keep OPSEC in mind.

### *What to Post on Your Organizational Twitter Page*

- It is generally preferred to have links in your tweets rather than just text. Links make your tweets more interactive and less static. Share information with followers but also give them a link to check out more information.
- Try to post relevant photos and videos when you can.
- Don't overwhelm your followers with tweets, but tweet enough to remind them you exist. You have many more chances to post on Twitter than you do on other social media sites.
- Don't drop names just because you can. Have a reason for all of your mentions. Similarly, do not use hashtags just to garner more attention. Make sure they are relevant, and do not use too many hashtags per tweet (otherwise, your tweet will look too busy and unfocused).
- Use URL shortening services to save space in your tweets. Use one that provides you with metrics.

### *How to Interact on Twitter*

- Thank people for retweets, mentions and following you as appropriate. Use a tweet or direct message to thank them.
- Although you can use up to 140 characters, try to go no longer than 120 to allow people an easier time retweeting your messages.
- Become familiar with Twitter language. Not only will you look like a pro, you'll also communicate better. Social media books and online resources can help.
- Be brief, but professional with your text.
- Interact on Twitter. Avoid tweeting only your own news and information. See what your followers and other relevant people have to say. Retweet and comment on other people's tweets and answer questions as appropriate.

# YOUTUBE

YouTube is a video sharing website that allows users to upload, share and view videos. When posting a video, it's important to include a description along with a short, descriptive title. Be sure to provide specific tags as well. Tags are keywords that apply to the video, such as objects and subjects in the video or words that help describe what's in the video. The purpose of tags is to help your video appear during a Web search.

## Anatomy of an Effective YouTube Video

- Interesting video with mass appeal
- Three minutes long is the ideal length, but extremely interesting videos can be longer
- Good description, title and tags

## YouTube Channel Considerations

- Have a comment policy and external links disclaimer posted.
- Check your inbox daily. Respond to users as appropriate.
- Review and approve comments before posting.
- Customize the look of your channel.
- Upload videos regularly.
- Post short and interesting videos. Remember OPSEC.

# FLICKR

Flickr is an image hosting and sharing website. Users can embed the images they host into other social media sites such as Facebook or blogs. Like with video, it's extremely important to keep OPSEC in mind. Get in touch with your local PA office to ensure your images are releasable or follow the guidelines laid out in AFI 35-109, *Visual Information*, sections A5.2 and A5.3.

Air Force imagery must follow DoD standards. Users must also provide a caption and

tags. Photo captions require slightly more information because the subjects in the photo can't speak for themselves, unlike with a video. Captions require at least two sentences. The first sentence contains a who, what, when, where and why. The second sentence expands on the first, placing the image in a larger context.

## Anatomy of a Good Flickr Photo

- Action shot with mass appeal
- Relevant and descriptive tags that will help users find the photo
- Official photos must have captions that follow the DoD style
- Photo content must not show violations of regulations or compromise OPSEC
- Must be publicly released

## Flickr Considerations

- Have a comment policy and external links disclaimer posted.
- Check your inbox daily. Respond to users as appropriate.
- Review comments.
- Upload photos regularly. Remember OPSEC.

# BLOGS

Blogs are websites with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events or other material such as graphics or video, self-published by bloggers. Entries are commonly displayed in reverse-chronological order. A typical blog combines text, images and links to other blogs, websites and other media related to its topic. The ability of readers to leave comments in an interactive format is an important part of many blogs. Personality or "voice" is what makes blog postings different from standard news stories.

## The Anatomy of an Effective Blog Post

- Catchy, descriptive headline
- 300+ words: informal and conversational firsthand account of an experience – this is not a news article
- At least one photo with a caption
- Embedded hyperlinks to relevant content
- Use titles to separate sections as appropriate
- Ask a question to readers to spark conversation
- Keywords or tags

## Blog Considerations

- Carefully consider your design.
- Have a comment policy and external links disclaimer posted.
- Review comments daily.
- Keep OPSEC in mind.
- Post regularly.

# Social Media and Your Public Affairs Program

Only units with a compelling need to communicate with the public may have an official Air Force social media property. With few exceptions and in concert with Air Force public Web policy, this means only wings and higher may have an official Air Force social media presence. Official properties must adhere to quality assurance standards outlined in AFI 35-107, *Public Web Communications* and register with the Social Media Directory.

If a unit below the wing has a compelling reason to communicate with the public, it must submit a waiver request to AFPAA Social Media for approval of an exception to policy.

## *Calling it “Official”*

### Eligible:

- Wing or higher (automatically approved)
- Compelling need to reach general public (below wing requires waiver)
- Must be registered with the Social Media Directory maintained by AFPAA
- Commanders are ultimately responsible for posted materials

### Ineligible:

- Below wing
- Intended for internal audiences (squadron members, spouse or booster clubs)
- Should be “closed” or “private” property

## *Registration of Official Social Media Properties*

According to the Department of Defense Directive-Type Memorandum 09-026, *Responsible and Effective Use of Internet-Based Capabilities*, official social media properties must be registered. To register your official property, submit it to the Air Force Social Media Directory, <http://www.af.mil/socialmedia.asp>, which helps af.mil visitors find and verify the authenticity of official social media properties.

For any questions regarding social media platforms or official social media properties, consult the AFPAA Social Media team.



## *Creating an Official Social Media Presence*

- Include social media in your communication plan. Establish goals and audiences for each social media presence.
- Obtain approval from your commander before establishing a social media presence.
- Set up your official presence as a government organization.
- Choose your account name wisely. It should be descriptive yet succinct in order to remain memorable and easy to use in posts.
- Have an external links disclaimer and comment policy on your social media property.
- Keep your social media properties current and free of spam, offensive material and items that violate your comment policy.
- Clearly state that your property is an official Air Force site in the information or account section. Provide a link to your official Air Force website.
- Submit your official Air Force social media property for registration in a timely manner with the Air Force Social Media Directory, <http://www.af.mil/socialmedia.asp>. Do not register informal or internal social media accounts with the social media directory.

The organic nature of social media makes it easy to use; however, the basics of public affairs still apply. Have plans and processes in place and invest time in developing your program. Some effective ways to use social media are:

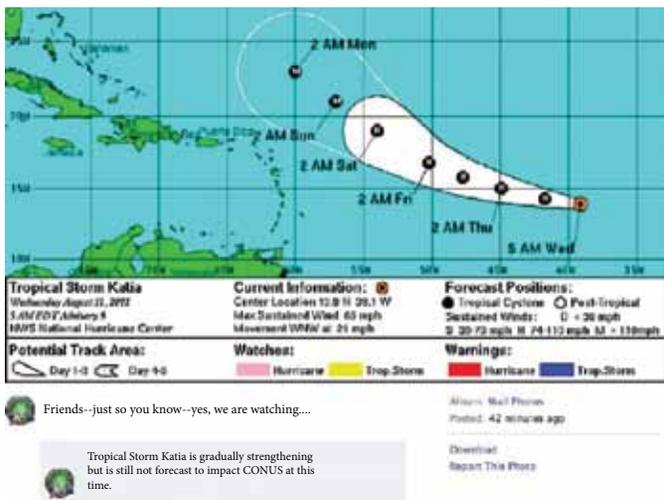
- Use social media platforms only if you can fully commit. If necessary, pick only one social media platform and use it well rather than spreading your resources too thin across multiple platforms.
- Make sure that you'll have enough content to sustain a social media property on a regular basis. Consider having your messages promoted through existing Air Force social media properties if you won't have enough regular content to sustain your own social media presence.

## Social Media Tools for Public Affairs Professionals

	YouTube, Vimeo, etc.	Facebook, Google+, etc.	Microblogs (e.g., Twitter, Tumblr)	Flickr, Photobucket, etc.	Blog (e.g., Wordpress, TypePad)	Location-based network (e.g., Foursquare)
<b>Platform Description</b>	Upload and share your own videos	Share select articles, videos, information and photos from internal or external sources	Share select bursts of information from internal and external sources	Share and view your own photos	Publish informal stories	Connect with fans as they explore places
<b>Style</b>	Short, action-packed, mission-oriented or behind-the-scenes video	Informal or striking photos with captions; short videos	Links to formal/informal photos	Informal photos, striking formal photos with captions	Photos and video relevant to blog text	User-submitted photos
<b>Imagery</b>						
<b>Writing</b>	Short descriptions and relevant keywords; conversational comments	Informal, conversational messages that can be freestanding or about content you've shared	Short, informal and conversational; use of hashtags, abbreviations and retweets in Twitter	Conversational comments	1st person, informal and conversational; similar to journal entry	Informal
<b>Goal/Main Purpose</b>						
Communicate informally, personally	X	X	X	X	X	X
Share videos	X	X	X	X	X	
Share photos		X	X	X	X	X
Tell personal stories					X	
Receive feedback and have conversations	X	X	X	X	X	
Share information with internal audience ^	X	X	X	X		
Direct followers to specific content elsewhere		X	X			X
Share short status messages		X	X			
Extend reach of your existing Web content	X	X	X	X	X	

^ By selecting privacy settings in the tool, information will not be available to the public or will be only available to some. You may also be able to create a private group.

- Do not auto-feed post from one platform to others. It's not effective and can actually confuse your followers. In one case, an official unit Facebook page posted a tropical storm tracker and text in reference to the storm:



This text was auto-fed to their Twitter account, and this is what Twitter fans saw:



- Keep the spirit of social media. Be informal, conversational, transparent & fun.
- Research new tools. If you want your social media program to evolve, carve out time to learn about new tools to help you communicate more efficiently.
- Get to know your audience. Social media is about sharing interesting and useful information with your followers and cultivating a community. Conduct online research and monitoring to more effectively develop audience-centered content.
- Find creative ways to engage followers. Social media sites shouldn't simply use base website information. Post unique content to your social media properties to generate interest. Don't focus solely on driving traffic to your website – you should also share products from external sources about your units and people.

## Content Source Ideas

- Fact sheets on Air Force websites
  - Highlight a little known fact
  - Quiz followers
- Historical information and trivia
- Photos and videos on Air Force websites
- Pose general questions to the audience
- User-generated content

- Special events
- Post specific content requested by followers
- Spotlights on people
- A day in the life...
- Guest blog posts from military family members
- Blogs from senior leaders and team members
- Find an Air Force tie to an event in the news
- Caption, video or photo contest
- Host a tweetchat
- Highlight new technology
- Helpful tips
- Have a guest contributor answer questions on a specific topic
- Share posts from other Air Force social media sites

- Measure your effectiveness. Consider tracking metrics to see if you are meeting your goals and tweak your strategy. Taking the time to measure your performance will allow you to better meet your commander's objectives.
  - There are plenty of free tools and paid service providers to help you gather the raw numbers you will need. Some social media platforms have built-in metrics trackers.

## Measurement Ideas

- Total fans, followers or subscribers
- Comments and likes
- Clicks
- Unique visitors and page views
- Mentions and retweets

## Measurement and Analysis

Here are some possible ways to analyze your data:

- Spike in unlikes => Possibly due to media events, too many posts, dull posts or lack of interaction with fans.
- Click referrers => Do followers prefer external, unique or Air Force website content? What types of content perform better on Facebook, Twitter, etc.?
- Retweets => What types of tweets are being retweeted and which ones are not?

- Collaborate with other organizations daily. Your social media content will reach more people if you collaborate with other organizations such as your MAJCOM and/or AFPAA, who can help promote your content. For major events, involve other organizations early in the planning process.
- Interact with followers. Social media is inherently conversational, and followers expect to have conversations with you. Unlike your unit's official website, simply pushing out content is not acceptable. You will quickly lose your audience if you fail to interact.

- Review comments and questions and respond accordingly. Taking interest in your followers' stories will increase their goodwill toward you, while providing you an opportunity to gain invaluable insight into their needs and interests.
- Moderate your social media sites. Consistently moderating activity on your social media sites protects you and your followers. We recommend checking your sites at least once every 24 hours including weekends.
  - Moderating your sites includes removing spam, OPSEC violations, irrelevant content, foul or offensive language and anything else that violates your comment policy. The purpose of moderation is to maintain a professional and open exchange of ideas, not to stifle conversations. Negative comments are acceptable. Followers appreciate moderated social media sites because it helps them feel comfortable. Banning or deleting followers should only be done in extreme cases as a last resort.



## Suspicious Package

In August 2011, a suspicious package was found on Scott AFB, and the public affairs team used social media as its primary communication channel to release information and answer questions. They were able to proactively control rumors and prevent panic.



**Quick Tip** A site full of spam demonstrates that administrators aren't responsive and don't maintain their page.

- Use social media during a crisis. In a crisis, social media is a vital tool in the public affairs toolkit. It's a quick, direct way to communicate information instantaneously to mass audiences so they get accurate information directly from the Air Force.

## Japan Earthquake and Tsunami

Social media served as a key communication tool during the Japan earthquake and tsunami in early 2011. On a global level, social media was the first stop for general information on the welfare of loved ones. Victims let friends and family know they were safe via Facebook, and others looked to social media for firsthand accounts of conditions in Japan. Fans appreciated having a central location for information during a crisis. Social media was used for base-wide internal announcements at a time when other forms of communication were down.

## Tips for Using Social Media During a Crisis

- The traditional rules of crisis communication apply.
- Earn the trust of your followers by posting both good and bad news. When you have a major crisis the audience is more likely to trust your information and appreciate your openness.
- Share accurate and approved information as quickly as possible. Don't wait for an article or press release to be available.
- Actively monitor conversations and questions on your social media properties. Answer questions and direct them to credible, approved information.
- Establish a monitoring schedule and assign roles to team members. Be prepared to monitor outside of regular duty hours.
- Monitor other social media and websites to help you decide what to post to your properties. You may address inaccurate information or rumors.

- Collaborate with other Air Force units to help spread your message. Share information with one another.
- Complete an after-action report, and use lessons learned to help when the next crisis arises.



- Promote your social media properties. The more people who know about them, the greater the chances you have of reaching key audiences with your messages. Ways to promote your properties include:
  - Interacting on sites other than your own. (Don't spam other sites or shamefully advertise your sites.)
  - Listing your properties in your email signature block or on your business card
  - Creating a quick response code with links to your sites and putting it on your products
  - Discussing your sites with internal audiences

**Quick Tip** Do not overwhelm your audience by posting too frequently.

- Manage social media records as appropriate. Official Air Force social media properties should be archived in some manner until an official records management policy for social media is available. Content that resides on an official government site is already accounted for as a record, but new content or information, such as non-government or third party, should be archived. You should archive any social media posts related to specific missions or activities that have their own records management requirements. Some ways to maintain records include:
  - Copying and pasting content into a document
  - Saving screenshots
  - Sending yourself emails
  - Keeping RSS alerts from your social media sites
  - Using backup/archiving software
- Have a posting schedule. Consider your resources, the amount of content available and workload, but also think about your audiences. Consider peak engagement times and frequency when building your schedule. For instance, if the majority of your audience is at work or school all day, you could post

during lunch time, in the evening and on the weekend.

- Establish an editorial calendar to manage posts, plan for the future and reach goals. Some days there will be an abundance of content to share, while at other times there won't be as much. Prioritize content and be prepared to switch gears when big events or crises occur.

## Social Media Posting Checklist

Consider the following items and adjust this checklist to fit your strategy:

- Does it fulfill an Air Force priority?
- Will the audiences care? Is it value-added info? Think attention-interest-desire-action.
- If the information doesn't show the Air Force in a positive light, is it fairly reported? If posting an external piece, is it accurate? If it's relevant, ties into Air Force goals/messages or shows transparency, it's acceptable to consider posting.
- Does it imply an endorsement of a certain political affiliation, religious ideology or commercial enterprise? If so, do not use.
- What angle are you taking with this story? Are you focusing on the right message and the relevant and crucial information?
- Have you created a shortened URL? Does it work?
- Check for proper spelling, grammar and format (e.g., spacing, names).
- Check for proper OPSEC. If in doubt, get higher review and approval before posting.
- Remember security, accuracy, policy and propriety.
- Have you chosen an appropriate thumbnail (for Flickr, YouTube and Facebook)?
- Have you chosen the appropriate text to show alongside the thumbnail in Facebook (especially for Flickr)?
- Are the Airmen being featured within regulation (e.g., using proper protective equipment, in the correct uniforms, etc.)?
- Is there anyone you should tag or mention? Have you used proper hashtags?
- Are your initials on the post?
- Get a second pair of eyes to review before posting. You can't catch everything.
- If you're not sure you should post it, channel it up for review!
- Watch the post for at least 15 minutes after publishing (to catch any errors and interact with people commenting/sharing your content).
- If you've made a mistake, apologize and make a correction promptly after publishing a post.

# Social Media and the Air Force Public Affairs Agency

Airmen at all levels and grades are encouraged to tell the Air Force story and send content to AFPAA for consideration. Content intended for Air Force social media must not violate OPSEC or security, accuracy, policy and propriety, and should be of interest to a large audience across the U.S. and international community. For example, followers deem stories about Airmen and their experiences popular. AFPAA reserves the right to choose what will be posted and edited to meet the needs of followers and strategic Air Force themes and messages.

## Quick Tips for Submitting Social Media Content to AFPAA

- Content must have mass appeal. Anything too narrow in scope, for a very specific and small audience or location-specific is not appropriate.
- Don't wait until the last minute! Include AFPAA in your planning process to allow adequate time for posts to be developed.
- Send content to [afpaa.hq.socialmedia@us.af.mil](mailto:afpaa.hq.socialmedia@us.af.mil) for consideration. If possible, submit the following information (but not required):
  - Preferred posting date
  - Message or angle
  - Who to tag or mention
  - Requested text
- When submitting photos or video, include captions that cover the 5 Ws.
- Articles must be written clearly avoiding acronyms and jargon.
- Watch AFPAA's social media properties, particularly Facebook, for your content, and jump in to interact with followers as appropriate.
- Tell friends and family to check out your content and share it.

While AFPAA runs several social media properties and tests new tools often, the following platforms are actively used by AFPAA on a regular basis.

- The Air Force's official Facebook account is [www.facebook.com/usairforce](http://www.facebook.com/usairforce). With this page, the Air Force posts links to written, photo and video material that represents the Air Force. Let AFPAA know if you have a Facebook page, so your page can be tagged when content from your organization is posted. Also feel free to tag the Air Force Facebook page, but if you have an interesting story with broad appeal, contact AFPAA directly instead, so that AFPAA can post the content to its timeline directly. Your content will be seen by more people.



- When requesting the Air Force share information on its Twitter handle, [www.twitter.com/usairforce](http://www.twitter.com/usairforce), keep in mind the audience is very diverse. Events that are very limited in scope may not be effective for the account but may work on a MAJCOM or wing account with a specific group of followers. AFPAA is willing to help where possible and has been able to post content specifically intended for an area by using a regional or topical hashtag (e.g., #DC). A Twitter handle will not work for all bases, so consider your unit's mission, surrounding community and the pros and cons of maintaining a content-hungry platform before jumping into this particular social media platform.

- AFBlueTube is the Air Force's official YouTube account. With this channel, the Air Force posts video material that represents the Air Force. The following settings are recommended for the best results:



- Exported in H.264 format
- Frame resolution for high definition (HD) set at 1,280x720 for 16:9 and 640x480 for 4:3. For video shot in standard display (SD) change display resolution to 640x360 for 16:9 and 640x480 for 4:3
- Frame rate (fps) should be set at 29.97fps
- Field order is progressive or non progressive if shot on tape
- Maximum bitrate settings at 5,000 kbps (5 Mbps) with 2 pass encoding
- Audio settings for H.264 video set at Advance Audio Coding (AAC) with a sample rate of 48 khz and bitrate set at 320 kbps
- Describe events in the video and provide a short, descriptive title
- Include specific tags (keywords)

- AFPAA has a Flickr photostream at [www.flickr.com/usairforce](http://www.flickr.com/usairforce). AFPAA focuses on photos with mass appeal showing Airmen performing the mission. Airmen at all levels of their organizations and units are encouraged to submit pictures that tell the Air Force story to AFPAA along with proper captions.

- When writing a blog post for potential submission to the Air Force Live blog, there are some things to keep in mind. Write from a first-person view. Your post shouldn't be too lengthy. We recommend 300-600 words, but more is acceptable as long as it's an interesting personal story. Include at least one photo or a short video if possible.



Blog posts typically have keyword tags associated with them, so send your blog in with relevant keywords: category, content, job title, general location, topic, etc. Provide a few sentences about yourself as an introduction to your blog, such as information about your job, where you work, how long you've been in the Air

Force and anything else interesting that sheds light on why you wrote your blog post. It's important to provide photos or video with your blog submissions, but if this isn't possible, at the minimum provide a profile picture.



- Mobile applications (commonly referred to as apps) offer opportunities to educate audiences or provide services to streamline functions. Air Force policy does not prohibit organizations from developing mobile apps related to their missions. However, potential creators must be aware of pitfalls such as OPSEC vulnerabilities and costs associated with the development and maintenance of apps.

Anyone looking into developing an app for official purposes must consult with the AFPAA Social Media Division for guidance.



# Air Force Symbol

The Air Force Symbol visually represents our service's brand identity. Using the Air Force Symbol on an official social media platform is authorized; however, maintain its integrity by using the guidelines below.



When using the Air Force Symbol, it's not mandatory to use the logotype "U.S. Air Force." If the logotype is used, the preferred position is beneath the symbol. It's also acceptable to place the logotype on the right or left side of the symbol. Placing the logotype above the symbol is not approved.



Stand-off space around the symbol or the symbol with logotype, known as the signature, is required at all times except when cradling approved emblems between the wings. Only MAJCOM, FOA or higher-level emblems approved and registered with the Air Force Historical Research Agency are permitted inside the wings of the Air Force Symbol. Only one emblem may be placed inside the wings. Cradling an approved emblem in the Air Force Symbol is for official use only and requires the emblem to be held in a set proportion to the symbol.



Stretching or distorting the symbol or the signature is prohibited. Other prohibited alterations include, but are not limited to: changing the symbol's texture or color, varying the symbol's distinctive shape and adding shadows or special effects. For more information on the approved symbol colors, visit <http://www.trademark.af.mil/symbol/colors/index.asp>.



The symbol may be used in a flag or header as long as the concept design is pre-approved by the Air Force Trademark and Licensing Office. The symbol should add to the overall design. For more information on the symbol, visit [www.trademark.af.mil](http://www.trademark.af.mil). If you have any questions regarding the Air Force Symbol or other trademarked logos, contact the Air Force Trademark & Licensing Program at [afpaa.hq.tl@us.af.mil](mailto:afpaa.hq.tl@us.af.mil).

## Policy

The following Department of Defense and Air Force publications contain information to consider when using social media:

1. DTM 09-026, *Responsible and Effective Use of Internet-Based Capabilities*: Covers applicability, definitions, policy, responsibilities and releasability regarding Internet-based capabilities.
2. AFI 35-101, *Public Affairs Mission*: Covers the overall public affairs mission and how to correctly implement it.
3. AFI 35-107, *Public Web Communications*: Addresses the public Web program and social media.
4. AFI 35-113, *Command Information*: Section 15 covers social media.
5. AFI 33-129, *Web Management and Internet Use*: Details proper and improper uses of Internet-based capabilities.



1. Why does the Air Force use social media? Why should my organization use social media?

Social media is a very influential communication tool that many people use to find and share news and information.

Your organization should use social media because people who are interested in you are already using it. Social media allows you instant feedback from your audience and gives you a direct communication line to it. Don't underestimate the ability of your audience to share your news with an even larger audience by sharing it with their friends and family online.

2. Does my organization need approval before using social media?

Yes, a commander must decide if his or her unit is going to have a social media site. Only organizations at the wing-level or above can have official social media sites. See question 9 for more information.

If you want to communicate to an internal audience, you may want to consider something like a closed Facebook group or any other private social media site. Just keep in mind that privacy is not guaranteed on any social media site so you should not post classified or sensitive material to them. Your wing public affairs office is a great resource to find out more information.

Regardless of the type of organization you are, you first need to think about what you want to accomplish with your social media program. Official properties are the responsibility of a public affairs office to ensure they meet commanders' communication objectives and requirements.



3. I want the official Air Force social media team to help promote my content. Where do I send it?

You can send requests to [afpaa.hq.socialmedia@us.af.mil](mailto:afpaa.hq.socialmedia@us.af.mil) for consideration. Requests will be reviewed for relevance to audiences of AFPAA social media tools. Posts will be edited as necessary for the audience.

4. I'm afraid to use social media. What if people make negative comments?

Negative comments are acceptable. Allow your audience to openly communicate with you, so you can address concerns. This fosters an environment of open communication, which is essential to earning and maintaining public support of your people and mission. You have the ability to moderate comments by putting a comment policy in place and consistently enforcing it.

5. My unit wants to use social media, but we don't have enough time or resources. What can we do?

Don't feel like you have to use social media just because everyone else is using it. If you don't think that you can commit or you don't have enough content to sustain a social media property, there are other ways to get your content and message out through social media. AFPAA and your parent organization's public affairs office can promote your content as appropriate.

If you have a compelling reason to use social media, it's possible to be effective on little to no budget. You don't need to use every platform available. Pick the best platform for your situation. You might need only one person to manage a simple social media program.

It's difficult to say how much time you need for your program because it depends on how many platforms you're using and what your goals are. For a simple program that consists of only Facebook, you might need only two hours per day.

6. How do I set up social media accounts for my organization?

Setting up social media accounts is very simple as most sites have step-by-step instructions. We recommend that you play around with your personal social media accounts first before creating them for your organization. If you have specific questions, you can perform a quick Internet search for your answer, or you can contact your local public affairs office or AFPAA.



7. What should my unit's social media comment policy look like?

See the Air Force comment policy in the "about" section here: <http://www.facebook.com/USairforce>. You can customize it for your own unit's page.

8. What follower comments may I delete? Can I remove followers?

In general, you shouldn't stifle conversations or feedback. Let people express themselves even if their comments are negative as long as they don't violate your comment policy. You'll use your policy to determine whether or not to delete comments or posts from your followers. We recommend taking screenshots of content before deletion. You can also remind followers to adhere to your comment policy if you see a conversation heading toward the wrong direction. If someone posts a good comment, but only a small portion of the comment violates your comment policy, you can tell him or her to edit and repost it. Banning followers should be a last resort. Give people opportunities to correct their mistakes, and if they continue to violate the comment policy, you might consider removing them.

9. My squadron or group wants to use social media. What do I tell them?

Organizations below the wing-level may not have official properties and will not be registered with the Social Media Directory. Unofficial presences should be closed or private in order to limit exposure just to an internal audience. If a unit below the wing-level has a compelling reason for communicating with the general public it must apply for a waiver from AFPAA. Unit commanders will be ultimately responsible for all content posted to their social media properties.

10. What do I do if someone creates a false official social media presence?

Organizations do not have the right to remove unofficial presences unless they falsely portray themselves as an official presence. If there is a false account, you may report it to the social media platform's help section, or you can contact AFPAA for help at [afpaa.hq.socialmedia@us.af.mil](mailto:afpaa.hq.socialmedia@us.af.mil).

11. How can I set up a blog for my unit?

Contact the AFPAA Social Media team at [afpaa.hq.socialmedia@us.af.mil](mailto:afpaa.hq.socialmedia@us.af.mil) to discuss options and begin your request. Maintaining a blog requires a lot of time, dedication and preparation. If your unit is interested in having its own blog, first consider becoming a guest blogger on the Air Force's blog to get the feel for it.



- **ADMINISTRATOR**
  - A person with login, publishing and account management rights for a social media property. Commonly called an admin.
- **AUTHENTICITY**
  - The sense that something or someone is “real.” Social media enables people to publish content and engage in conversations that show their interests and values while communicating in an authentic human voice. Airmen should always be transparent and authentic while online.
- **AVATARS**
  - Graphical images representing people within the social media arena. You can build a visual character with the body, clothes, behaviors, gender and name of your choice. This may or may not be an authentic representation of you.
- **BACK CHANNEL COMMUNICATION**
  - Private emails or other messages sent by the facilitator or between individuals during public conferencing. They can have a significant effect on public conversations.
- **BANDWIDTH**
  - The capacity of an electronic line, such as a communications network or computer channel, to transmit bits per second (bps).
- **BLOGS**
  - An abbreviation of “Web log,” blogs are websites with dated items of content in reverse chronological order, self-published by an individual. Posts are typically about a particular subject, are usually available as feeds and often allow commenting.
- **BLOGOSPHERE**
  - A term used to describe the totality of blogs on the Internet and the conversations taking place within that sphere.



- **BLOGROLL**
  - A list of sites displayed in the sidebar of a blog, showing who the blogger reads regularly.
- **BOOKMARKING**
  - Saving the address of a website or item of content, either in your browser, or on a social bookmarking site like Del.icio.us. If you add tags, others can easily find your research too, and the social bookmarking site becomes an enormous public library.
- **BROWSER**
  - A tool used to view websites and access all the content available onscreen or by downloading. Microsoft Explorer, Firefox, Safari, Silk and Chrome are a few of the many Internet browsers available.
- **CATEGORIES**
  - Pre-specified ways to organize content (e.g., a set of keywords that you can use but not add to when posting on a site).
- **COLLABORATION**
  - Social media tools from email lists to virtual worlds offer enormous scope for collaboration. Low-risk activities like commenting, social bookmarking, chatting and blogging help develop the trust necessary for collaboration.
- **COMMENT POLICY**
  - Guidelines for followers’ behavior on social media platforms. Created by the property’s owner.
- **COMMENTS**
  - Feedback left by readers under posts. Social media sites may provide a feed for comments as well as for main entries.
- **COMMUNITY BUILDING**
  - The process of recruiting potential community or network participants, helping them to find shared interests and goals, use the technology and develop useful conversations.
- **CONTENT**
  - Text, pictures, video and any other meaningful material that is on the Internet.
- **CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**
  - Software suites offering the ability to create static Web pages, document stores, blogs, wikis and other tools.
- **CONVERSATION**
  - Blogging, commenting, posting or contributing to forums is the currency of social networking, which puts the “social” in this form of media.
- **COPYRIGHT**
  - A set of exclusive rights given to the creator of a piece of work. These rights often include copying, distributing, altering and displaying the work.



- **CROWDSOURCING**
  - Crowdsourcing refers to harnessing the skills and enthusiasm of those outside an organization who are prepared to volunteer their time contributing content and solving problems.
- **DEMOCRACY**
  - A system of government controlled by the whole population or by a majority of the population. Social networking and media are potentially attractive to those who want to revive representative democracy, and those who promote participative approaches or both. Social media offers politicians and their constituents another communication channel. It also offers a wide range of methods for people to discuss, deliberate and take action.
- **EMAIL ALERTS**
  - Notifications set up to be sent to a user's email inbox about activity on a social network or new items in a search result.
- **EMAIL LISTS**
  - Important networking tools offering the ability to "starburst" a message from a central postbox to any number of subscribers and for them to respond.
- **EMBEDDING**
  - The act of inserting a link, video or photos to a website or email.
- **EXTERNAL LINK DISCLAIMER**
  - A disclaimer states that neither the Air Force nor the unit endorses the product(s) or organizational entity at the hyperlink destination. The disclaimer must also state that the Air Force does not exercise any responsibility or oversight of the content at destination. Required by AFI 35-107, *Public Web Communications*.
- **FACE-TO-FACE**
  - Used to describe people meeting offline.
- **FACILITATOR**
  - Someone who helps people in an online group or forum manage their conversations.
- **FEEDS**
  - The means by which you can read, view or listen to items from blogs and other RSS-enabled sites without visiting the site by subscribing and using an aggregator or newsreader.
- **FLASH**
  - Animation software used to develop interactive graphics for websites as well as desktop presentations and games.
- **FORUMS**
  - Discussion areas on websites, where people can post messages or comment on existing messages asynchronously—that is, independently of time or place.

- **GEOTAGGING**
  - Providing geographical location information to photos, videos and other files. Information appears as a file's metadata. People may also geotag their whereabouts.
- **GROUPS**
  - Collections of individuals with some sense of unity through their activities, interests or values. They differ from networks, which are dispersed, and defined by nodes and connections.
- **HASHTAG**
  - Words or phrases prefixed with a # symbol. Used in Twitter to track similar tweets and conversations.
- **HYPERLINK**
  - Text, images or graphics that when clicked with a mouse (or activated by keystrokes) will connect the user to a new website. The link is usually obvious, such as underlined text or a "button" of some type.
- **KEYWORDS**
  - Captures the essence of the topic of a document, video or photo. Provides easy retrieval of a piece of content from a search engine.
- **LOGOTYPE**
  - Text in a particular typeface creating an identifiable mark.
- **LURKERS**
  - People who read but don't contribute or add comments to forums. The one percent rule-of-thumb suggests that one percent of people contribute new content to an online community, another nine percent comment, and the rest lurk.
- **MASHUPS**
  - Mixes of technology, audio, video and maps. Involves combining several tools to create a new Web service.
- **METRICS**
  - Raw numbers or statistics that track a communication campaign's effectiveness.
- **METADATA**
  - Data that provides information about one or more aspects of content.
- **MICROBLOG**
  - Social media site, such as Twitter, that allows users to share small elements of information such as short sentences, individual images, video and website links.
- **MOBILE APPLICATION OR APP**
  - Program designed to run on a mobile device, like a smartphone. Designed to quickly access information, games, tools and other helpful programs.
- **MOBILE WEBSITE**
  - A website version designed & formatted specifically for use by mobile devices.



- **MODERATING**
  - Act of patrolling a social media property. Involves interacting with followers and ensuring appropriate use of the property by followers.
- **NETWORKS**
  - Structures defined by nodes and the connections between them. In social networks, the nodes are people, and the connections are the relationships they have. Networking is the process by which you develop and strengthen those relationships.
- **ONLINE COMMUNITIES**
  - Online communities are groups of people communicating through the Internet, mainly through the use of online forums, or other social media sites (e.g., Facebook).
- **OPEN-SOURCE SOFTWARE**
  - Software available under a license permitting users to study, change and improve the software, and to redistribute it in modified or unmodified form. It is often developed in a public, collaborative manner.
- **PEER-TO-PEER**
  - Refers to direct interaction between two people in a network. In that network, each peer will be connected to other peers, opening the opportunity for further sharing and learning.
- **PERMALINK**
  - The address (URL) of an item of content, for example a blog post, rather than the address of a Web page with lots of different items. You will often find it at the end of a blog post.
- **PHOTO SHARING**
  - Uploading images to a website like Flickr, adding tags and offering people the opportunity to comment or even re-use your photos if you add an appropriate copyright license.
- **PODCAST**
  - Audio or video content that can be downloaded automatically through a subscription to a website so you can view or listen offline.
- **POST**
  - Item on a forum or social media site.
- **PROFILES**
  - Information that users provide about themselves when signing up for a social networking site as well as a picture and basic information. This may include personal and business interests, a “blurb” and tags to help people search for like-minded people.
- **PROPERTY**
  - The proper term for a social media presence, platform or “site.” These are your social media accounts. (e.g., [www.facebook.com/usairforce](http://www.facebook.com/usairforce) is the official Facebook property of the United States Air Force.)



- **QUICK RESPONSE (QR) CODE**
  - A type of barcode that can be read by mobile phones by using a QR code reading application. QR codes contain a URL and are used to direct users to an online destination.
- **RSS**
  - Short for Really Simple Syndication. This allows subscribers to receive content from blogs, websites and other social media sites and have it delivered through a feed.
- **SOCIAL MEDIA ADVOCACY**
  - Using social media networks to create a movement of net-fluencers to influence conversation, actions or motives in support of one’s objective.
- **SOCIAL MEDIA**
  - Tools and platforms people use to publish, converse and share content online.
- **SOCIAL NETWORK AGGREGATION**
  - Gathering content from blogs and websites through RSS feeds. Typically displayed in an aggregator like Google Reader, Digg, Reddit and Yelp, among others, or directly on your desktop using software. Beneficial for breaking news and gathering content about specific topics or keywords.
- **SOCIAL NETWORKING**
  - Online places where users can create profiles, and then socialize with others using a range of social media tools including blogs, video, images, tags, lists of friends, forums and messages.
- **STREAMING MEDIA**
  - Video or audio that is intended to be listened to online but not stored permanently.
- **TAGS**
  - Keywords added to a blog post, photo or video to help users find people, related topics or media.
- **TRACKBACK**
  - A facility for other bloggers to leave a calling card automatically, instead of commenting. Blogger A may write on blog A about an item on blogger B’s site, and through the trackback facility leave a link on B’s site back to A. The collection of comments and trackbacks on a site facilitates conversations.
- **TRANSPARENCY**
  - A state in which all information is freely available implying openness and accountability.
- **TROLL**
  - A hurtful, but possibly valuable, person who, for whatever reason, is both obsessed by and constantly annoyed with, and deeply offended by everything you write on your site. One may not be able to stop the commenting of trolls on your site. You can’t ban them from commenting on other sites and pointing back to the page, and they can’t be banned from posting things on their own page that point back to your site.



- **TWEET UP**
  - Event where Twitter followers agree to meet. Like a meet-up, but Twitter is used to set up the meeting, normally using hashtags like #tweetup.
- **URL**
  - Uniform Resource Locator is the technical term for a Web address like <http://www.af.mil>.
- **URL SHORTENER**
  - Site that generates a shortened form of a URL link. Best used in microblogs, such as Twitter, to save space. May also provide click statistics.
- **VIRTUAL WORLDS**
  - Online places like Second Life, where you can create a representation of yourself (an avatar) and socialize with other residents.
- **WEB 2.0**
  - A term coined by O'Reilly Media in 2004 to describe blogs, wikis, social networking sites and other Internet-based services that emphasize collaboration and sharing, rather than less interactive publishing (Web 1.0). It's associated with the idea of the Internet as a platform.
- **WIDGETS**
  - Stand-alone applications that can be embedded in other applications, like a website or a desktop.
- **WHITEBOARDS**
  - Online equivalents of glossy surfaces where one can write with an appropriate marker pen and wipe off later. They're tools that enable one to write or sketch on a Web page, and as such are useful in collaboration online.
- **WIKI**
  - A Web page, or set of pages, that can be edited collaboratively. The best known example is Wikipedia, an encyclopedia created by thousands of contributors across the world. Once people have appropriate permissions, set by the wiki owner, they can create pages and/or add to and alter existing pages.



- **AFB**
  - Air Force Base
- **AFI**
  - Air Force Instruction
- **AFPAA**
  - Air Force Public Affairs Agency
- **DM**
  - Direct message
- **DoD**
  - Department of Defense
- **FOA**
  - Field Operating Agency
- **MAJCOM**
  - Major Command
- **MB**
  - Megabyte
- **OPSEC**
  - Operations Security
- **PA**
  - Public Affairs
- **RSS**
  - Real Simple Syndication
- **RT**
  - Retweet
- **UCMJ**
  - Uniform Code of Military Justice
- **URL**
  - Uniform Resource Locator