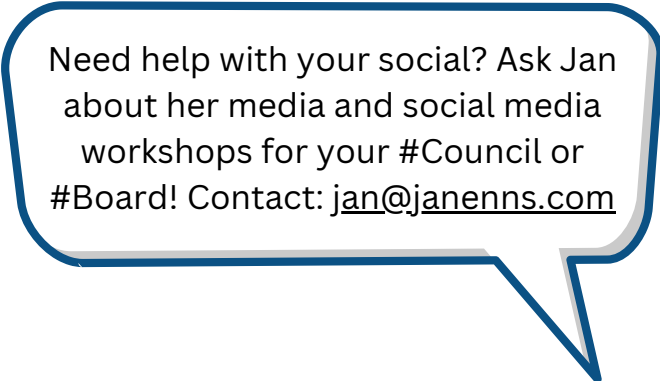




#LGLA2022: SOCIAL MEDIA SURVIVAL SKILLS

Love it or hate it, social media topped the discussions at our 2022 LGLA conference. In the rousing and humorous panel session with Mayor Richard Stewart and Mayor Lori Ackerman, led by #LocalGov Communications Strategist Jan Enns, delegates shared their lessons learned in this tumultuous term. Several key themes emerged from your comments on how to better master your social media. Thank you to everyone for sharing their powerful stories and to our wise and witty panelists!

Here's a summary of your lessons learned and shared!



Need help with your social? Ask Jan about her media and social media workshops for your #Council or #Board! Contact: jan@janenns.com



SETUP FOR SUCCESS

WORKING WITH A TEAM

- Create a social media policy for staff and for council:
 - *Make sure it's written to fit the capacity of your team.*
 - *Small communities sometimes struggle to keep up with capacity.*
 - *Defer tasks to the person whose job it is.*
 - *Create a policy, not just a code of conduct, which can be too vague.*
 - *Involve a communications person or staff.*
 - *Social media training needs to be included in orientation and expanded.*

BE PROACTIVE BY SETTING BOUNDARIES FROM THE START

- Block comments on municipal Facebook posts:
 - *Provide alternatives to social media commenting for citizen engagement. For example, Let's Talk Creston where posts are moderated by the platform host, or Bang the Table.*
- Turn off the ability for others to tag you.
- On Zoom, require first and last names and have the camera on.
- It's okay to block people, especially on personal pages.
 - *Sometimes, this means blocking everyone except friends and family.*

We can prevent ourselves from being tagged.

Have a policy and post your ground rules.

WHAT TO POST

STICK TO THE FACTS

- Know your facts.
- When distributing information, share, don't interpret.
- You can't correct misinformation.
- Make sure your posts are factual.
- Reference sources.
- Only respond to real names with facts.
- Inform but don't argue.

TIPS FOR POSTING

- Repost official announcements.
- Use it as an information posting page to share announcements.
- Follow others to learn what they are doing.
- Host the conversation rather than chase it.
- Videos are effective at times (EOC, etc).
- Use Twitter to push out key messages.
- During emergencies, communicate regularly even if the message has not changed.
- Easier to have a Q&A on topics.
- Facebook is not the place to do official business.
- Don't open the door on social media.
- Use social media to inform the community what's going on and what I'm doing.
- Consistent posts are effective, rather than sporadic:
 - *Post regularly to shift conversations.*

***Post facts,
don't debate.***

HOW TO ENGAGE (OR NOT)

DON'TS

- Don't feed the trolls:
 - *Protect your real estate by stating "No Trolls" on your page.*
 - *Don't engage; don't go down the rabbit hole.*
- Do not argue, but correct glaringly wrong information.
- Don't respond to personal attacks.
- We can be our own worst enemy when we continually engage folks who are looking to argue.
- We are there to make decisions, not to get your vote—don't engage on election issues.

DOS

- People appreciate a sense of humour, self-depreciation.
- Consider your audience and your method of interaction. For example, what are you wearing on your zoom call?
- Be proactive.
- Reach out privately to communication champions so they can respond. Thank them.
- Pause before responding.
- Take control of the conversation. For example, be careful where you respond to comments!
- Conversations and interactions are a two-way street. Need a way to make it social. I.e. not one way. Monitored buy back and forth. Use it to educate!
- Expose it in another media that you control.
- Screenshot issues to come back to later.
- Refer elsewhere:
 - *Refer to appropriate department/ministry.*
 - *Herd people back to official reporting and communications channels and to city web and info.*
 - *Have a directors page.*
 - *Redirect to town office.*

“**Don't engage with trolls—you can't win.**”

HOW TO ENGAGE (OR NOT)

USE YOUR JUDGEMENT

- With any one person on any one issue, only engage twice.
- Engaging keeps the story alive.
- Direct contact is sometimes better.
- Take it off social media—use email or phone.
- Say nothing. Use it when we need it.
- Do not always engage. Sometimes silence is golden.

“***Offer to take the conversation offline.***”



STAY HEALTHY!

SET BOUNDARIES AROUND YOUR PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA USE

- Protect your own mental health.
- Set parameters around time devoted to social media.
- Don't debate things you can't win.
- Set boundaries about feed and what shows up there.
- Communicate your social media expectations:
 - *For example, if you're not on Facebook very often (especially for personal pages).*
 - *When people complain about my lack of presence: I tell them that my mental health is more fragile these days so I spend less time on Facebook!*
- We can listen, read but it's not our responsibility to take on someone else's anger. Help us not take those feelings home at the end of the day.

STAYING POSITIVE

- Stay positive and always take the High Road.
- Focus on sharing good news.
- There can be fear to post positive comments on Facebook (during controversy).
- Train and educate on mental health.

Stay positive and always take the High Road.

Focus on sharing good news.

Drink wine and vent to your dog!

PASSIONATE COMMUNITY ADVOCATES & GROUPS

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- The vocal members of the group may not be representative of the group, let alone the population.
- The qualitative feedback can be useful and efficient in understanding your constituents, so you're learning from more people and not just those who go out of their way to contact local government.
- Reach out to moderators.
- Don't sign up for Facebook groups.
- Social media complainers are a small minority.
- People on social media are looking for an echo chamber.
- Twitter is less volatile than Facebook.
- A and W are groups!

The vocal members of the group may not be representative of the group, let alone the population.



LOVE IT OR HATE IT COMMENTS ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA

- For better or worse, it's necessary if:
 - *Running for council.*
 - *Correcting erroneous statements.*
- Policy to not respond on social media:
 - *It's not council/staff's job to monitor police social media.*
 - *Look but do not engage. Do not open the conversation but say they can email the appropriate person.*
 - *Vocal minority are still the vocal minority.*
- "Likes" are an addiction.
- There is no such thing as a 'personal' social media presence.
- Our staff did not sign up for this abuse or "fame".
- Stress leave of CAOs key staff.
- People are leaving because of abuse. Fear for next term democracy.
- Perhaps for some people the ranting is cathartic?
- It's pretty difficult to be both a publicist and a moderator when you are a Councillor/local official trying to do your job.
- Balancing a job at being heard but also showing we are still human:
 - *Opportunity to educate people humanize social media. These are real people who live and work here.*
- Nothing is private/personal when you are an elected official. It comes across as an endorsement.
- You never know what will get traction and take off.
- Beware faux neutrality and false equivalency.
- There is no wrong or right, only different! Versus sometimes there is a right, sometimes there is a wrong, sometimes there is a "different".
 - *Purpose: Just focus on differences and let the public decide if they think it is right or wrong or better.*
- Closed minds, open hearts.
- Rise above.

***Nothing is private/personal when
you are an elected official.***