

Creating Engaging Content

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Engagement is any interaction with followers (clicks, likes, follows, comments, shares, etc.) but most importantly, Engagement turns your feed into a conversation. It's about building trust & loyalty, generating feedback and creating a community. Remember, you have to create a connection before creating content, so your audience trusts you and wants to hear what you have to say. Above all, be sure anything you post is in line with your brand and organizational goals.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

- **Know your audience**
 - What will they respond to?
 - What do they care about?
- **Know your purpose**
 - Why are you posting this?
 - What do you want to accomplish?
 - How does this fit your goals & values?

MEDIA ESSENTIALS:

- Eye-catching uniqueness
- Authentic & representative
- On-brand aesthetic
- Correct size & resolution
- Follow graphic design rules

WRITING BASICS

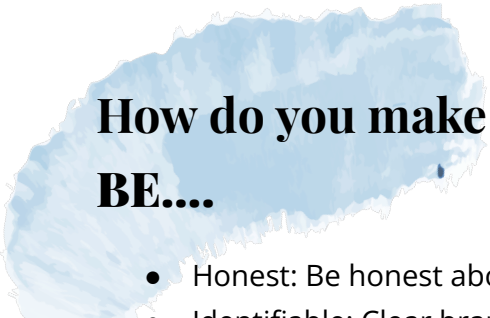
- **Copy Structure:** Brief and to the point, but cover the important details
 - **Intro:** Catchy, scroll-stopping hook to get them reading
 - **Essential Details:** Who, what, when, where, why and/or how
 - **Call to Action:** What should the reader do as a result of this?
- **Active Voice:** Avoid *be* verbs: am, are, is, was, were, will, have, had, has
 - **NOT:** The offender was chased and caught by police.
 - **INSTEAD:** Police chased and caught the offender.
 - **NOT:** Council will be voting on the order this Tuesday.
 - **INSTEAD:** Council votes on the order this Tuesday.

- Avoid Cliches: Learn to recognize your “safety” words. If you don’t know, ask!
 - Are you ____? We have the ____ for you!, ...and much more!, Did you know..., I am going to tell you/Here are a few things
- Sell the Result: Don’t sell the product or service, sell the RESULT. Why are you sharing the information? Why does it matter to your audience?
 - NOT: Sign up for boot camp today!
 - INSTEAD: Get stronger, faster and more confident today!
- The Audience is the Star: Write with your audience as the main character, keeping the focus on them, not you.
 - NOT: We will open registration for the event on Friday.
 - INSTEAD: Sign up Friday/Register your family Friday!
- Spark Interest: Copy doesn’t need every detail; it’s the teaser that opens the door, not what seals the deal!
 - NOT: Trash cycles will be shifting for all residents east of Main Street. Those houses north of Road St. will now have pickup on Tuesday instead of Thursday, and...
 - INSTEAD: Is your family’s trash day changing? Click here!
- Eliminate Excess: Check, recheck and double-check for any extra, unnecessary or overused words that are not really needed to fully get your exact message across to the people who are reading your text so you can remove them from the paragraph and make the wording more precisely to the point you are trying to make.
 - NOT: Come join us to learn how to be a better cook.
 - INSTEAD: Learn cooking.
 - NOT: Don’t forget to make plans to come join us... INSTEAD: Join us... (or Save the Date!)
 - NOT: Trash service will not run on Monday. Anyone with Monday pickup will have trash picked up on Tuesday.
 - INSTEAD: Monday trash will be picked up on Tuesday.
 - These words are often unnecessary and can be eliminated without any impact to the sentence: Come, Help, Try, and more, Actually, Basically, Currently, Presently, Suddenly, Seriously, Thing(s), Probably, Very/Really, Extra/Also, Link/Website/Online, Like/Almost/Maybe, There is/Here are
- Match the Image: Anything you write should match the content covered and graphics or images alongside it. Not only the information, like dates or times, but also the tone/style.
- Say it Out Loud: Sometimes it makes sense on the page but not when spoken. Read your writing back to a friend and see if what comes out matches the intent.
- Stay Positive: You can get the same message across without lecturing or shaming, and they will appreciate it!
 - NOT: No dogs may enter the event without a leash.
 - INSTEAD: Dogs on leash welcome!

- Stay Human: Residents don't have much experience in government. Keep all phrasing as "pedestrian" as possible, in simple everyday terms.
 - NOT: Construction has entered the grubbing phase.
 - INSTEAD: Dirt work and ground leveling is underway!
- Stay on Brand: All copy should stay in the tone and personality of your organization's brand. This isn't a showcase of your skills, but a way to share your city with the world.
- Longer Copy: Sometimes there's room for a longer block of text, like an online description. Follow all rules above but also:
 - Keep paragraphs short
 - Use the inverted pyramid of content
 - Think about what they NEED to know
 - Think about what they WANT to know
 - Take advantage of the space to generate interest
- Confirm all Info
 - Double check any details before posting or sending
 - Is all of the information current?
 - Do the links work?
 - Are there spelling or grammar errors?
 - If you are sharing on behalf of someone else, confirm the information is correct and able to be shared with the public.

FINAL CHECK BEFORE POSTING:

- Can it be shorter or punchier?
- Are you speaking like a non-city human?
- Am I speaking TO the specific audience intended?
- Can I eliminate any BE verbs?
- Did I include all the important details?
- Does the link work?
- Are there any misspellings in the text or graphics?
- Is the purpose of the message clear?
- Has it been confirmed/cleared by all parties?
- Is this a good representation of our organization?



How do you make content engaging?

BE....

- Honest: Be honest about mistakes, tell it like it is.
- Identifiable: Clear branding and cohesive style for a more professional look.
- Relevant: Why does this matter to your audience? Tailor the message to who you want to reach, tell them why they care.
- Timely: Use current holidays and trending memes/topics to take advantage of algorithms and look more fun.
- Narrative: Tell a story with words, pictures or videos to hook readers in and capture their attention.
- Conversational: Talk like a real person!
- Funny: Anything that makes people laugh will make them listen and share.
- Emotional: Sweet and sappy is just as effective as laughter, and sharing positive, heartwarming stories helps residents associate those warm fuzzies with your organization.
- Illustrative: Make sure the text creates dynamic imagery in the readers' minds, strike an emotion and spark interest vs spouting facts.
- Educational: Educational content is highly engaging, more likely to be shared and can help you distribute important information in a fun way.
- Graphic: Something different, interactive or a unique take on the everyday will catch readers attention.
- Surprising: More emotions... shock and awe is always a good one!
- Visual: Stop the scroll images, unexpected, unseen views, something with a wow.
- Helpful: What can you do to make residents' lives better or easier? What do they need to know?
- Interactive: Get people involved! Guarantees engagement and is a fun way to share info. Contests, quizzes, polls, etc.
- Personal: User generated content is always a win! Find stuff they post or ask for submissions. Use personal content and perspectives from staff

Not all engagement is good engagement! Don't risk your reputation or lose residents' trust for the sake of viral content.

Remember, the goal is to build a relationship with your residents and form crucial trust and connection. Have fun with it, try something new and be brave...you aren't carving anything into stone! Enjoy *earning the follow* and your community will respond!

Questions?

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