



Social Media Tips for Campus Ministries

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Social media is a great way to tell the many stories of life and of your campus ministry. This Quicksheet aims to help you and your campus ministry better understand and better utilize different social media platforms.

There's no "I" in "We" – Being mindful of your online voice

First and foremost, never use first person in your captions or posts! When you make a post from your campus ministries page, remember that you are speaking on behalf of your institution. Using "we", "our" or "us" is more professional and allows your followers to hear from your ministry and not from you, individually. This distinction is healthy and good for your online identity. I will admit, sometimes it is strange to post about yourself in the third person, but power through because it's for the best.

Let's say, for example, that you are hosting an event that you are also emceeing. You are trying to promote it on social media. You might be inclined to say something like, "Join me tonight for Scary Storytelling at the coffee shot. I will be emceeing, and I hope to see you there". That's not a good idea. Don't post that. Instead, try something like this, "Join us tonight for Scary Storytelling at the coffee shop. Our very own Jaclyn Beeler is emceeing, you don't want to miss this spooky event". Okay, the end might be a little cheesy, but you get the picture.

Don't make it personal – Keeping business and personal accounts separate

Now that we know to only use third person language, let's talk about how important it is to separate your personal social media posts from your business posts. Your vacation pictures are beautiful, and your children are cute, but they do not belong on the campus ministry page you are managing. Keep business, business and personal, personal. When people follow a UKirk account, they are following to learn more about a campus ministry and its story, not your personal life.

There can be too much of a good thing! – Content frequency

When you manage a business/ministry account, people are already a little hesitant to follow you; they are afraid you will spam their feeds. I try to be extra careful about how much I post from the accounts I run because of this. Posting daily is okay but if you are planning to post more than one post in a day, make sure you don't post back to back. Even though things don't show up in chronological order anymore, you can still see when someone posts back to back. It can seem repetitive which can lead to people becoming uninterested in your content. If you have more than one post you want to make in a day, wait a few hours in between posts. People will appreciate it. Trust me, I know it is hard to wait sometimes if you have something exciting to share but just wait, everyone will be just as excited to see it a couple of hours later. The best times to post (this can change depending on your target demographic) are typically first thing in the morning, around noon and between 4pm and 7pm. These are times when people are taking a break from school or winding down for the day. That's not to say other times aren't okay, but I wouldn't post anything after 10pm.

Posting too often is one way to annoy people and another is by posting ridiculously long captions. Don't do that. If you have more to say, write a blog and share the link or find a shorter way to say what you want to say. When someone is scrolling through social media, they want it to be easy to read and straight to the point. We all value

our time and we need to also value our followers time as well. If you write a long caption and think, man that is long, go back and try to rework it to make it shorter. Be mindful.

As for Twitter, it is a different beast. Post as often as you want. Twitter is great for live reporting events, sending out short updates, polls, or engaging with your followers on a more personal level. Twitter rules are way different than other platforms. With that said, I wouldn't focus as much on Twitter but if you do, follow [@MoonPie](#) and be witty and fun like they are!

Picture it – Photograph quality

So, what do people want to see from businesses on social media? Here in Knoxville there is a local dairy farm called [Cruze Farm](#) (@cruzefarmgirl) and their [social media and brand management](#) is amazing. I hear people say often that it's their goal to get on Cruze's social media. Why? People like to see themselves and people they know and can relate to on social media. Since I started managing the UKirk social media accounts, and now a few other business accounts, I have noticed that people don't "like" posts as much with stock photos or photos with words over them. I will post photos with students and some of them will make comments saying, "I am UKirk famous", which makes me giggle but feel a little proud at the same time.

Take your time though. Followers want to see high quality photos of people and activities from your ministry. Be thoughtful when capturing a moment. Don't be sloppy and it will pay off. If you don't have a nice camera, that is okay! All I have is my iPhone 8 Plus. I just switch it to portrait mode and fake it 'till I make it, but I always take my time and make sure each photo is thought out. People spend an embarrassing amount of time on social media in a single day. Don't let them scroll past your posts because they aren't interesting enough or because they are sloppy. Take pride in what you're doing. Social Media management is very important in brand management for any business.

Photo editing is also very important. Photo editing can be overdone but it can also be done beautifully. I do not use Instagram filters. Instead, I prefer separate apps for photo editing. The Adobe app, *Lightroom*, is great for photo editing. You can go on Etsy and buy *Lightroom* presets for under \$5 and they make your photos look professionally edited. I also like the *Afterlight* app for photo editing because it is very user friendly. Some other apps that are great for making flyers and content for your Instagram stories are *StoryChic*, *Canva* and *WordSwag*. All three of these apps will help your posts look professional and enticing to followers.

Getting a following – How to add followers to your social media accounts

I have talked a lot about followers and not losing them, but how do you get them to begin with? On Twitter and Instagram, just go follow people but not too many! Follow relevant people - people that have something in common with your business. For UKirk UTK, I follow UTK students, local businesses, area churches and other UTK and UKirk accounts. When you follow these other accounts, most of them will follow you back and you will then begin to grow your following. But remember, don't go overboard. You don't want to follow 4,000 people and then have 800 or 1,000 followers. Be somewhat deliberate about who you follow. Also, make sure to like other people's posts and engage with your followers on social media. I scroll through and like just about every post on our timeline, sometimes even taking the time to comment. It's important to be engaged with the people you are following if you are expecting them to engage with your posts.

As for Facebook, invite people to like your page and ask students, church members, parents, area pastors, to invite others to like your page. It is sometimes easier to get a following on Facebook than it is on Twitter and Instagram because you can send direct invitations to people to like your page and even invite all your friends! If someone doesn't want to like your page, they don't have to accept the invitation. Once you begin, it just begins to snowball and build momentum. Someone that likes your page may share a post and then their friends see it, resulting in more page likes. Remember though, don't spam people's feed!

To boost or not to boost? – Why boost a post?

Now that you have a following and you are posting some quality photos and captions, you might be wondering, "when is it appropriate to boost a post?" I personally don't like to pay Facebook and Instagram to boost posts.

Instead, I like to grow our following and let posts “boost” organically but sometimes you just need to fork over the money. I usually boost posts that advertise an event or a video “ad” in order to help with fundraising.

#whatarehashtagsanyway – How to properly use a hashtag

Hashtags, what’s the point? I would argue that they are valuable, and you can now follow hashtags on Instagram. With that said, hashtags are only worth it if you use them correctly. Don’t use some obscure hashtag that no one has ever used before and no one ever will. Hashtags are meant to group things and find other accounts with similar interests. Also, don’t separate words in hashtags like, #I #love #hashtags.

For UKirk UTK I use hashtags like #PCUSA, as well as things like #UTKnoxville, #Rockytop, #GoVols, #Presbyterian, #UKirk, #Presby... you get the picture. I use these hashtags because they align with our context and are related to what we are doing and who we are as a ministry. I want people at UTK to see our posts, so I use UTK hashtags to do so. I also want other UKirk ministries and Presbyterian churches to see our posts, so I use hashtags that those groups would also use.

It is also important to have a hashtag that is specific to your campus ministry. Your supporters and students can use it and all the posts made about your campus ministry will be grouped together. Here at UKirk UTK, we use #UKirkUTK. When making a hashtag, don’t make it too complicated and try to make sure it isn’t already being used. Using hashtags that your town, city or community uses is also a great idea, like #KnoxvilleTN, #Rockytop, #UTKnoxville.

Blogs – Where everyone is a writer

If your website does not currently have a blog portion, I encourage you to add one. A blog on your website is a way to pull people to your site while also continuing to spread your story. Have board members write blogs about why they choose to serve on your board and why they financially support you. Ask students to write about things going on around campus or about why they love your ministry. Students can also write about a specific event they attended with the campus ministry and how it impacted them. A blog is also a great space for the campus minister to write about current events, devotions, or sermon recaps. A blog is a wonderful outlet for your ministry that can potentially reach much further than your campus or just your social media following. When you post a blog, post share the link on Facebook and put it in your Instagram story. Remember to always include photos in your blog because readers like to see things illustrated. It is also important to remember that when you want to share about your blog on Instagram, you need to note in the caption that followers can find the link in your bio. Instagram does not allow click-friendly links in captions.

Take pride in what you are doing. Students and supporters are relying more and more on social media and less and less on websites. When you keep your ministry’s social media accounts up to date, relevant and aesthetically pleasing, it makes it easier for followers to keep up with what you are doing. You have been entrusted with telling the story of a campus ministry. Take pride in it and you will see growth in followers that are invested and interested in what your organization is up to. Happy posting!

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