KITCHENER

Online Communications Strategy

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Please note that the statistics and data included in this strategy were collected in 2010.
As with any set of statistics, numbers will change over time.

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City of Kitchener

Online Communications Strategy

The Opportunity

Within a few short years, online communications, and social media in particular, have revolutionized communications and information sharing worldwide – creating what some experts call the most significant and fundamental shift in world culture since the Industrial Revolution, the automobile and television.

Social media tools – like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube – are rapidly changing the way we discover, consume and share information. Transforming online monologues into engaging dialogues, social media platforms enable millions of people worldwide to connect and communicate in new and innovative ways – to be content creators, critics, reviewers and filmmakers.

"How can you squander even one more day not taking advantage of one of the greatest shifts of our generation?"

Seth Godin, social media expert and best-selling author

For the first time in history, technology has reached a point where everyone has a voice – where content is everything and everything is content, and where the conversation is everywhere.

Unprecedented opportunity

Smart organizations are joining the online discussion and leveraging this emerging and highly-effective channel – in combination with traditional communications – to enhance and increase the ways they reach out to and engage stakeholders.

Social media is changing the world – and it is forcing organizations like the City of Kitchener to rethink communications and marketing strategies and to learn to navigate this new online landscape – or be left behind.

By embracing the world of social media and creating a well-thought-out approach to it, the City of Kitchener can capitalize on an unprecedented opportunity to inspire, enable, nurture and facilitate more relevant, more authentic and more effective communications with residents and other community stakeholders – which ultimately creates a more informed and engaged community.

Please note that the statistics and data included in this strategy were collected in 2010.
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Traditional Communications

refers to the sharing of information for any purpose via commonly used traditional tools such as media relations (media releases, advisories, interviews), print (brochures, posters, news-paper advertisements) television or radio.

Online Communications

refers to the communications of information through the use of the Internet for any purpose (i.e. information sharing, marketing, engagement). There are several different general categories of online communications, including, but not limited to social media, social networking, online advertising and email marketing

Social Media

focuses on building online communities of people who share interests and/or activities, or who are interested in exploring the interests and activities of others through two-way communication. Popular methods include Facebook and Twitter.

A Kitchener Perspective

Sharing information with the public is critical to fulfilling the City of Kitchener's commitment to accountability and transparency. Everyday, the city openly communicates with residents and stakeholders, providing relevant and timely information about the programs, services and decisions that affect them.

But where once the city primarily communicated important information through traditional communications methods – including radio, print and television – today stakeholders have come to expect information to be available in more convenient online formats, including on the city's website, and via social media tools like Facebook and Twitter.

Cities responding with feedback:

City of Ottawa

City of London

City of Oshawa

City of Edmonton

City of Calgary

City of Saskatoon

City of Markham

City of Fredericton

City of Victoria

City of San Jose, California

Township of Woolwich

City of Halifax

Kitchener is connected

Research and the results of community surveys and consultations show that the trends that we see happening globally – including increased Internet use, the use of social media tools and ever changing online demographics – are indicative of what is happening right here in Kitchener.

Many Kitchener residents are using social media tools, including Facebook, YouTube, podcasts, blogs and RSS feeds. More than 800 residents and stakeholders are already receiving real-time information from the city on Facebook – though the city has never advertised its presence there.

The Benefits

This Online Communications Strategy positions the City of Kitchener for the future, enabling the corporation to begin to make the critical shift toward a more balanced approach to the use of traditional and online communications methods to reach out to and engage residents and community stakeholders.

Through the implementation of an Online Communications Strategy, the City of Kitchener can improve the sharing of information with the general public, engage more residents, be more open and transparent and support a number of other existing strategies, including:

- The City of Kitchener Strategic Plan
- Economic Development Strategy
- Talent Recruitment Strategy (under development)
- Youth Services Strategy
- Community Engagement Strategy
- Customer Service Strategy
- Diversity Strategy (under development)

Additionally, an online communications strategy will:

- Support the general public's expectation for enhanced access to online information as additional online engagement opportunities.

- Improve the city's ability to effectively get information to its stakeholders, including diverse audiences, through a more balanced approach – and   use of existing resources.

- Ensure that, through a combination of traditional and online communications, the time and resources the city spends on marketing and communications is used effectively.

- Enhance the city's ability to listen to citizens and other stakeholders and learning and improving from their insights – through gathering information and insights into how the public perceives the organization and its work, or topics that are of relevance and interest to target audiences.

- Increase openness and transparency of information and provide more accessible customer service through increasing the city's ability to respond to questions, requests and inaccurate information online in real-time.

- Ensure the continuous monitoring, tracking, researching and evaluation of online communications tools, trends and best practices, leading to continuous improvement and the potential use of new tools in the future.

Strategy Development

The City of Kitchener's Online Communications Strategy began with the development of the Terms of Reference in September 2009.

The completed strategy represents the culmination of more than eight months of information collection and research analysis, weekly meetings, group discussions and constructive debate – involving several staff from across the corporation as well as external focus groups.

The development of the strategy included extensive research and analysis on a wide variety of relevant topics, outlined below in the Strategy Scope section. Additionally, significant research was conducted into how other Canadian municipalities are using social media, their successes and challenges – and their own work to develop social media strategies and policies.

Initially, nearly 40 cities worldwide that are using social media to engage residents and other community stakeholders were contacted and asked to share information about their social media best practices, policies and strategies. In-depth interviews and research were eventually conducted with 12 of those cities – 11 from Canada and one from the US. Additionally, a full case study was also completed with the city of Edmonton – a Canadian municipal leader in the use of social media for community information sharing and engagement purposes.

Community Engagement

The city has a longstanding commitment to openly providing information to citizens and encouraging their involvement in key decisions and projects that affect them. The city's recently-adopted Community Engagement Strategy makes the following commitment:

To the best of its ability, and as appropriate, the City of Kitchener is committed to using community engagement strategies and tools that involve the community in decision making to the highest degree possible. It is in everyone's best interest to support leadership and community capacity.

To that end, the Online Communications Strategy is built on extensive community engagement, including the results of recent community surveys and consultations, as well as additional feedback from specific focus groups.

Residents have expressed a strong desire to have more access to city information online through several community consultations in recent months, including:
- 2007 Voter Turnout Survey – 300 participants.
- 2009 "How Did You Know" Online Communications Survey of citizens – 800 participants.
- 2010 Environics Survey of citizens – 900 participants.
- 2010 Who-are-you-Kitchener community consultation – (results under analysis).

This strategy responds to the feedbacks specific to online communications from each community consultation.

Additionally, in the spring of 2010, the recommendations from the strategy were vetted with community groups including:

- Kitchener Youth Action Council (KYAC)
- Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee (GRAAC)
- Bits & Bytes Computer Club for seniors

Feedback received from each group was taken into consideration as the strategy recommendations were finalized for inclusion. The feedback was supportive of the direction that the strategy has taken – in terms of developing a more balanced approach between the use of traditional and online communications methods.

Strategy Scope

The development of the City of Kitchener's Online Communications Strategy involved extensive information collection and research analysis on topics including:

Demographics
- Study of general Internet use – Canadian, provincial and by city
- Demographic study of social networking use – Canadian and provincial statistics
- Comparison of demographic studies with Environics Survey results
- Online communications ability to target youth, seniors and volunteers

Background
- Trends toward online communications: academic rationale and psychological reasons for the shift
- General advantages and disadvantages of online communications and traditional communications.

Current Communications Tools & Trends
- Effectiveness of current communications tools
- Production analysis for current tools
- Full analysis of communication tool survey results

RSS feeds (Really Simple Syndication), will be included in the new website design. The feeds will enable interested users to subscribe to the news from the City site that most interests them and receive automatic updates.

Other

- Integration between online and traditional communications
- Impact of increased online communications on traditional media relations
- Comparison/benchmarking with other municipalities and competitive facilities
- Required corporate policies (new and any changes to existing)
- Corporate Social Media Guidelines for Staff
- General online communications etiquette
- Effective copywriting for an online audience
- Guidelines for appropriate online posts
- Best practices for keeping content relevant and up to date
- Measuring the effectiveness of online communications
- Email marketing
- Priorities for future staff training in online communications and social networking
- Search engine optimization
- Use of staff email signatures for promotional purposes
- Glossary of Terms

Social Media/OnlineTools

- Facebook
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- Wikipedia
- MySpace
- Blogs
- Digg
- YouTube
- Podcasting
- Google Ads
- Yahoo advertising
- Craigslist
- Flickr
- RSS feeds
- E-newsletters
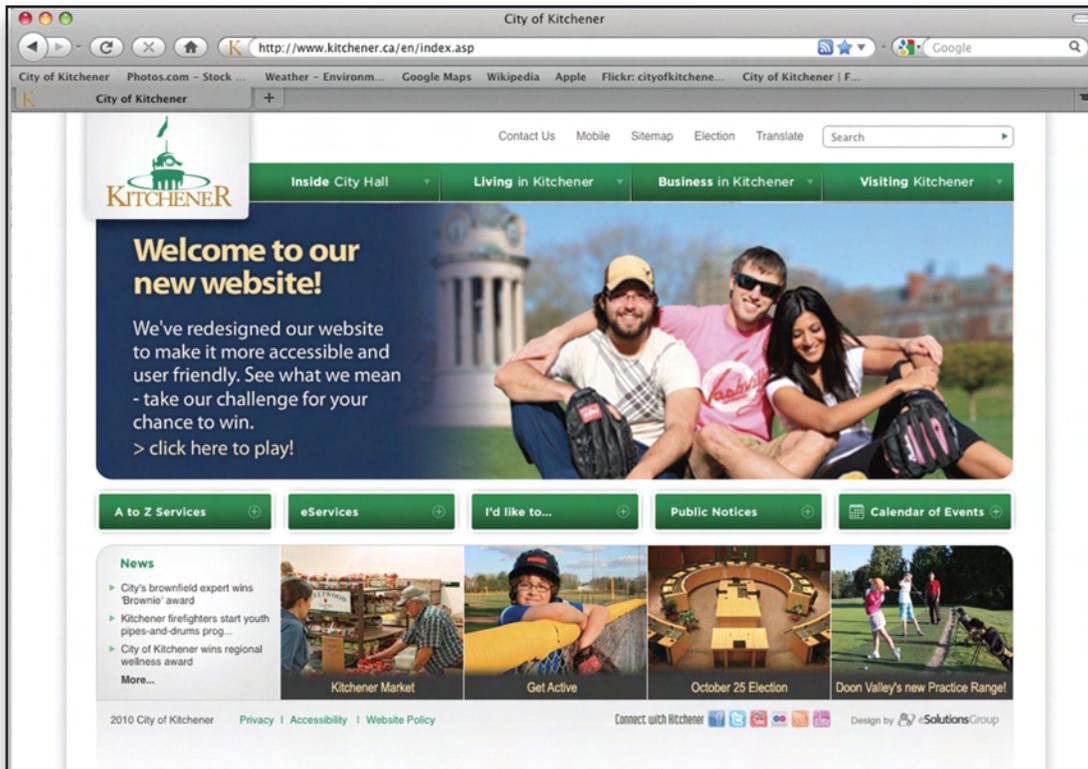
Synergies with the city's Website

While there will undoubtedly be synergies between the development and implementation of the Online Communications Strategy and the redesign of the city's website, the website was not included within the scope of this project.

The city's corporate website is a primary tool used to share information with its stakeholders online.

However, in addition to the city's traditional website there are a number of new and emerging technologies and services – such as RSS feeds – that can also be used to effectively share information with stakeholders online. (The corporate website committee made the decision to include the RSS feeds as part of the newly redesigned website.)

With the redevelopment of the website underway as the strategy was being researched and developed, this strategy will complement the city's new website.

Other initiatives that were not considered during the development of this strategy include:

- The addition of any new websites for the city, its enterprises or affiliated groups.
- Communication tools intended to target a solely internal audience were also not considered during the development of the strategy.

Project Team

The core project research team included members of the Corporate Communications and Marketing Division staff, as well as staff from outside of the division who were specifically chosen to participate on the project team because of their personal knowledge of, and experience with, online communications and social networking tools.

The project team included:

- Nicole Amaral, Senior Graphic Designer
- Andrea Bailey, Communications and Marketing Associate
- Trevor Botting, Senior Graphic Designer
- Colleen Collins, Communications and Marketing Associate
- Paula Costa, Systems Analyst, IT
- Jeremy Dueck, Supervisor of Business Sales for The Aud
- Lori-Ann Livingston, Communications and Marketing Associate
- Janette MacDonald, Technical Analyst - Economic Development
- Terry Marr, Manager of Marketing and Creative Services
- Kendra Martin, Marketing and Communications Associate
- Michael May, Director, Corporate Communications & Marketing
- Jana Miller, Manager, Corporate Communications
- Angela Nant, HR Assistant, Human Resources
- Michelle Riediger, Communications and Marketing Associate
- Timm Vera, Senior Graphic Designer

While not part of the formal project team, given their experience in developing similar reviews and strategies, Kathryn Dever, organizational change management, and Loretta Alonzo, auditor, reviewed key documents and provided advice throughout the development of the strategy.

Strategy Approach

The City of Kitchener's comprehensive Online Communications Strategy recommends a shift toward a more balanced approach between the use of online communications and traditional communications.

The strategy supports that shift with recommendations, based on extensive research, for how the city can and should enhance its communications through the use of appropriate social media tools – and for how it can do so using existing staff resources.

Accompanying Policies and Guidelines

Additionally, during the strategy's development, the project team recognized that while developing a comprehensive approach to social media that supports the city's current strategies and communication goals and objectives is important, equally as important is the establishment of parameters for issues including:

- What social media tools the corporation will use
- How new tools and accounts will be created, when, by whom
- How the tools will be used, when, by whom
- How the tools will be monitored and evaluated
- Inappropriate content
- Addressing privacy, protection of personal information and records management requirements.

As a result, the project team has developed – in collaboration with staff from the city's legal and records management divisions – one of the most comprehensive municipal Corporate Social Media Policies in the country. Very few Canadian municipalities currently have as comprehensive a policy in place and several are awaiting outcome of Kitchener's process to develop their own strategy and policy.

Additionally, to ensure ease of communications of the basic tenets of the policy to staff, Social Media Guidelines for staff have also been developed. The guidelines, meant to be a handy, quick reference, cover basic tips and employee expectations for personal use of social media tools to discuss, when being used to discuss, share or comment on city business.

Accompanying guidelines for effective web writing and proper netiquette, which will help staff improve the quality of content and online interactions, have also been developed and will be communicated to staff. Additionally, best practices in online advertising design have also been developed.

> **Recommendations:**
> 1. That the attached Corporate Social Media Policy (Appendix B) and Social Media Guidelines for Staff (Appendix C) be approved and communicated to City of Kitchener staff.
>
> 2. That the attached guidelines for effective web-writing (Appendix D) be endorsed for use by all city staff writing online content for the city's websites and social media pages.

Responsibility, Accountability, Resourcing:

Research has shown that beginning with a few of the most popular and effective social media tools – and those which best meet the city's communications objectives – will enable the city to establish a presence in the world of social media that can be easily monitored and maintained with existing staff resources.

However, if the City of Kitchener is to be successful with the use of social media tools to reach out to residents and stakeholders, their use needs to be carefully co-ordinated – it cannot be ad-hoc. To ensure the best approach to the consistent use, messaging and monitoring of corporate social media tools, there is a need to centralize the oversight of social media tools – and to establish a single corporate account for recommended social media tools – to ensure that:

- Information communicated to the public through social media tools is consistent with messaging that has been or will be communicated through all channels – traditional or online.

- Information for updates on projects and initiatives corporate-wide – is co-ordinated in a centralized location – so that social media tools can be updated with timely, accurate information a few times each day, as fans and followers expect.

- Use of social media tools for engagement and information sharing purposes is part of the communications and marketing plans for all key corporate projects and initiatives.

The following recommendations address these specific needs.

Recommendations:

3. That the Corporate Communications and Marketing Division serve as a centralized resource for the oversight and use of social media sites by the city and its enterprises, as well as the creation and maintenance of content on those sites.

4. That the Corporate Communications and Marketing Division develop a centralized system available to all city staff to submit information for consideration and potential posting on social media sites.

5. That the Corporate Communications and Marketing Division review and revise its mandate and list of services provided to its customer to reflect the addition of social media and other online communications tools, before the end of 2010.

6. That the standard templates used for all communications and marketing plans be revised to include specific consideration for the use of online communications tools – including measuring their effectiveness – which are deemed appropriate to the specific target audiences, objectives, budget and key messages of each individual plan.

7. That the current position of Communications and Marketing Associate (Public Affairs) be reassigned to a Communications and Marketing Associate (Online Specialist), by reducing the amount of time spent in support of communications planning and public affairs writing, and taking on new responsibilities for specific content management and oversight of the city's online communications tools.

Single Corporate Account:

Based on best practices research and the experience of other Canadian municipalities currently using social media, the strategy recommends the establishment of a single official corporate account for social media tools including Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, from which information about all city programs, services, initiatives, projects and decisions can be disseminated.

A single corporate account will enable the city to provide information to stakeholders in yet another way that is becoming increasingly expected. Additionally, a single corporate account within each tool – as opposed to several accounts for various projects and enterprises – will ensure:

- Existing staff resources can be used to effectively use and monitor the tools.
- Consolidation of city's base of followers under a few accounts – greater ability to monitor and evaluate successes and challenges – and to provide timely response or follow up when required.
- Effort and advertising dollars needed to build followers are only required once.
- Consistency of corporate information presented through each tool.
- One-stop-shop for the public – consolidation of all city information in a few key locations where the public would expect to find it.

Corporate Training:

The use of social media tools often blurs the lines between the personal and the professional for employees.

Staff may or may not be official spokespersons for the city online – but many use personal websites, blogs and other social media tools where they may discuss, share or comment on city business. For this reason, it is important that city staff learn about the corporation's approach to social media, and about the policies and guidelines which are in place to support them when they use social media tools at work, or at home.

The following recommendation recognizes that during the development of the Online Communications Strategy, the Corporate Social Media Policy and the various staff guidelines, in-house staff has gained invaluable insight and expertise in the appropriate use of social media tools and the corporate documents which guide their use. To share that knowledge corporately, existing staff with this knowledge and expertise will develop and implement a corporate training program.

Recommendation:

8. **That the Corporate Communications and Marketing Division develop and deliver a comprehensive social media training program which is available to all city staff and includes, but is not limited to, the following information:**

    - **An introduction to online communications and social media**
    - **Purpose, benefits and risks of using online communications**
    - **Corporate Social Media Policy**
    - **Social Media Guidelines for city Staff (including netiquette)**
    - **Effective Web-Writing Guidelines**
    - **How to access and take advantage of the corporation's social media tools**

Situational Analysis

Current Situation

Currently, the City of Kitchener focuses the vast majority of its resources and efforts on communicating with its stakeholders through traditional forms of communications and marketing such as print, radio and television.

78% of Internet users will trust a peer review – even if they don't know the reviewer – over an organization's advertising message.

Mitch Joel, author, Six Pixels of Separation

While the city has done some work with online communications and engagement – most notably through its website, it does not currently take full advantage of new and emerging online communications and social networking technologies that could assist in more effectively sharing information with its stake-holders in ways that they have come to expect to be available.

The city has recently begun to explore the benefits and use of other online forms of communications however, the use of these tools to date has been ad-hoc, with little research, expertise or knowledge in the most effective and efficient ways to communicate online.

Trends Towards Online Communications

The transition in organizational communications that began with the advent of the World Wide Web, and the popularity of broadband Internet service, took a giant leap forward earlier this decade when several new services appeared online for the first time, including: Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

Collectively these and similar new services which continue to evolve, became known as social media. They have been so powerful in transforming the way the world communicates that many web experts describe their impact as more significant than the advent of radio or television. In the world of business and government too, social media is becoming as mainstream as websites and conference calls.

Why are people making the shift towards online communications? There is not one sole reason. In reality, everyone's presence online – and their reasons for delving into cyberspace are just as unique as they are, however studies indicate that there are both psychological and practical reasons behind the shift.

Some of the psychological reasons for the shift include:
- **The shift away from traditional mass media** to a focus on "from many to many" which eliminates the need for a few centralized organizations to compile and disseminate information to us about others.
- **The rise of the individual** – the opportunity to know what others are thinking and to share our own thoughts far and wide holds great appeal for many.

Additionally, everyone on the Internet has equal opportunity to have a voice.

- **Companionship and authenticit**y – people find fulfilling online relationships through connections to those in communities of shared interests and, in some cases, people feel they can be more authentic online than they are able to be with peers in real life.

- **How the Internet and social media enable people portray themselves** plays a significant role in the shift. These platforms not only enable people to express their tastes, attitudes and beliefs publicly – but they mean that people can hide, assume new identities, change everything about themselves or even remain completely anonymous.

According to Clay Shirky, author of the book "Here Comes Everbody – the Power of Organizing Without Organizations", some of the more practical reasons for the shift toward online communications include:

- **Trust** – underpinning all of the rationale as to why so many people are gravitating toward online communication channels is trust. Studies generally show that people perceive greater transparency of information online because:
  o Traditional media is not trusted by the masses; online information is supplied by many and not always the typical news media.
  o People trust people and organizations they know – or can get to know.
  o Their peers are there. People trust their peers' online reviews and comments more than they trust an organization's advertising.

- **Reading habits** – most people don't have a lot of time for reading; they do it in short stints while on a break or when they're checking their email. With these reading habits, short online content that is easily accessible better meets readers' needs today.

- **Portability** – with online content from mobile devices, people can read content anytime, anywhere without forethought or preparation.

- **Interactivity** – with print content, readers rarely have the opportunity to contact the author to share their thoughts, or to connect with others who may have comments about the article. Social media provides the ability to have conversations and provide feedback or comments, often in real-time.

- **Instant information sharing opportunities** – faster and more convenient than traditional communication methods like the newspaper and even television.

- **Selection** – Users have the ability to select which online media they want to receive information from – information tailored to their own needs and interests finds them, they don't have to look for it.

- **Speed and convenience** – it can take months to see something in print in a magazine while it's possible to read and comment on the news almost as it happens today online.

- **Niche content** – in a world that is trending more and more towards specialization, people want to know about what they want to know about right now. Niche content is readily available online.

- **Shareability** – online content is easily shareable with others. People can pass on information they like to others with a click of the mouse.

Online + Traditional = A Canadian Trend

Canadians spend an average of more than 45 hours per week consuming traditional media and engaging in live entertainment activities.

There is no difference between Internet users and non- users in total time spent using these traditional media or attending entertainment events.

Youth (12-17) use traditional media 40 hours per week – about 15 % less than adults 18 years or older.

Mass media like television, radio, newspaper and books remain popular sources of information consumption with all demographic audiences.

The greatest change is in the behaviour of users. More and more, Canadians tend to use media simultaneously – 3 of 4 Canadians say they engage in other activities while on the Internet.

Integration of traditional and online communications methods

While web experts agree that it is important to integrate online and traditional communications, there is virtually no information available as to the best -- way to accomplish that.

Private and public sector organizations that are currently embracing the shift toward the use of more social media tend to be doing so through experimentation to determine what tools work best for their business and communications objectives and goals.

The City of Kitchener believes in taking a well-researched, balanced approach between the ongoing use of traditional and proven methods of communications – including print, television and radio – and the introduction of wide reaching social media tools including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

A balanced approach will enable the city to reach as many stakeholders as possible, both those with experience online, as well as those who do not have access to a computer or who do not use social media sites. It will also ensure that residents will receive information from the city in a variety of ways that they are familiar with and in a variety of ways that they find convenient and expect it to be available in

Both traditional and online communications have advantages and disadvantages, many of which are outlined below:

Recommendation:
To help ensure that a balanced approach to the integration of traditional and online communications continues to be taken in the future, it is recommended that:

9. New and existing online social media tools will be evaluated and selected for use in conjunction with other traditional communications methods, by staff of the Corporate Communications and Marketing Division. Tools will be selected in collaboration with clients, in the same way that traditional methods of communitions are chosen for projects and initiatives – based on the size, scope, objectives and target audiences of the .

TRADITIONAL COMMUNICATIONS

Advantages	Disadvantages
Reaches residents who do not have access to a computer.	Advertising on these tools is generally expensive (radio, television, print). Media releases are not always picked up.
Can be directed to a local audience.	Tools are often specific to one particular audience (i.e. radio stations), sometimes advertising needs to be done in many different locations which dramatically increases the cost of campaigns.

TRADITIONAL COMMUNICATIONS (continued)

Advantages	Disadvantages
Residents expect to find information in certain locations (i.e. newspaper) and they look there for it.	Distribution of printed materials to a city-wide audience has negative environmental impacts.
In-house printing services enable the city to realize more cost effective printing.	Some residents view print materials as "junk mail" and discard it.
Radio provides flexibility – residents can listen to it anywhere, anytime.	Long lead times to produce printed materials.
Can reach out to mass audiences (i.e. newspaper, television, radio)	Print ads - forced to compete against clutter of other ads in print – less effective. Radio, television can be expensive.

ONLINE COMMUNICATIONS

Advantages	Disadvantages
Quick and easy to update	Not all residents have access to a computer.
An engaged following – people choose to follow the organization.	Many people still do not understand social media – not everyone who is on the Internet buys into or uses social media tools.
Flexibility and portability of the Internet – people can receive updates anywhere, anytime.	Predominantly text-based which may be challenging for some.
Cost efficient – use of tools is free unless advertising.	Postings can draw negative feedback that is shown publicly to anyone viewing the site or page and, due to best practices, should not be removed.
New level of engagement/customer service – not only provide information, but also can receive feedback, answer questions instantly	Residents may feel they are overloaded with all of the information they receive online.
Enables the city to develop community over time – build relationships, build trust and have a voice with residents online.	city information may get lost among all of the other information residents receive online.

Reaching diverse audiences

The City of Kitchener's Strategic Plan identifies the need to proactively communicate with all residents as a key component of providing efficient and effective government. Additionally, the plan identifies Diversity as one of six key community priorities identified by residents for ongoing focus and action over the next two decades.

With the goals of reaching as many residents as possible and making it as simple as possible for anyone to participate in community consultations – typically, the city's communications and community engagement efforts have focused on reaching a broad, city-wide audience through the use of a wide range of traditional tools, more recently combined with some online efforts.

Recognizing that a broad-based approach is not always the most effective approach in reaching key diverse audiences – including New Canadians, youth, seniors and persons with disabilities – these audiences are increasingly becoming the focus of more targeted communications efforts by the city.

The use of social media tools to reach diverse audiences – and a more balanced approach between traditional and online communications methods overall – will help to ensure that members of the city's diverse populations are being engaged and represented in important consultations and community decisions. Other benefits include:

- Ensuring that communications efforts go beyond traditional broad-based communication efforts on large-scale projects (including local newspaper, radio and television advertising) which typically aren't as popular with New Canadians and teens.

- Ensuring that the city is reaching out to diverse audiences through the most effective online forumsand communities and in ways that members will be comfortable sharing their thoughts.

- Ensuring that the city continues to embrace an attitude of "continuous improvement" in terms of increasing input into key city decisions from the city's diverse populations – and potentially increasing voter turnout from these demographics.

Diverse | Audience	Current Methods of Communication	Benefits of Online Communications
New Canadians If Kitchener were a village of 100 people, 27 people would be born outside of Canada and 14 would speak a language other than English at home.	Via specific focus groups Via targeted workshops Via broad-based community consultations	New Canadians may not feel comfortable providing feedback to the government or attending public meetings or workshops with the larger community. Online provides another method of outreach that is convenient, easy, and can be more comfortable for them to express their thoughts and opinions.
Youth Social media has transformed the online experience for younger Internet users –going online is about exploring, socializing and experiencing new forms of interaction.	Via specific focus groups Via targeted workshops Via the Kitchener Youth Action Council Via engaging local high school civics classes Via broad-based community consultations	Internet and social networking are extremely popular among youth: 96% of Canadian youth aged 12-17 are on the Internet; 84% of youth are using social networks. Provides another way to reach them which is familiar, where they are, where they are most comfortable.

Diverse | Audience	Current Methods of Communication	Benefits of Online Communications
Seniors Canada ranks number one in the world for Internet usage and engagement of people over 60. According to statistics Canada, the biggest increase in internet use since 2005 can be seen in the 70-75 year-old age group. While just over 26% of 70-75 year olds were online in 2005, 45% of that age group is currently online.	Via specific focus groups Via targeted workshops Via the Mayor's Advisory Council - MACKS Via broad-based community consultations	64% of Canadians 65 and over say that they go online everyday. Many seniors are engaging in new and emerging activities including social networking and photosharing. Provides yet another cost effective, simple way to reach them – combined with the traditional communication methods they count on.
Persons with Disabilities By 2020, it is anticipated that 20% of Canada's population will be persons with a disability.	Via specific focus groups - Via the Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee (GRAAC) Via ensuring components of broad-based consultations are as accessible as possible to all residents (ie. assistive devices available, accessible locations used.)	May not feel comfortable, or find it easy to attend public meetings and/or workshop. Online provides another method of outreach that is convenient, easy, and can be more comfortable for people to express their thoughts and opinions

What are other municipalities doing?

Through the development of the City of Kitchener's Online Strategy, extensive research was completed into the work that other Canadian municipalities are doing toward taking a more balanced approach to the use of traditional and online communications methods. Staff canvassed about 40 municipalities in Ontario, across Canada, and internationally who are known to be using social media tools successfully – 10 responded.

While online communications and engagement with residents via municipal websites is popular, the use of other online social media forums for information sharing and/or marketing purposes is still in its infancy for many Canadian municipalities. A few – most notably the cities of Edmonton and Calgary – are delving more heavily into the use of social media tools including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and RSS feeds.

Research from interviews and surveys returned from the nine other Canadian municipalities about their experiences with social media today indicated that most are at the beginning stages of utilizing social media and developing a balanced approach between its use and the use of traditional methods of communicating with residents.

- None of the 10 cities interviewed during the research phase have made a complete switch to online communications:

- Some cities initially hired a consultant to assist them with planning their strategy for getting   involved in social media.

- Most believe that a large part of their audience – if not the majority – still prefers and relies on traditional methods over online methods.

    o London reported using print advertising and inserts far less now that they are encouraging people to access information online.

    o Oshawa anticipates the need for less media releases in the future due to the increasing   popularity of Twitter and RSS feeds.

- All continue to use traditional methods including brochures, print advertising and media releases as their main methods for information sharing with residents.

- Most municipalities that are using social media tools have one corporate account within the social mediums they are using. For example, most have one Facebook account where information from all city departments is communicated through.

- A few cities (Oshawa, Saskatoon, Victoria, Edmonton and Markham) report that they are beginning to develop social media policies that put guidelines in place for the corporate use of social media.   San Jose, California has a social media policy in place while the city of Calgary has extended its existing Public Statements and Media Relations Policy to cover social media tools.

Canadian Cities on Facebook

British Columbia
City of Abbotsford
City of Burnaby
City of Kelowna
City of Nanaimo
City of Port Coquitlam
City of Surrey
City of Vancouver
City of Victoria

Alberta
City of Calgary
City of Edmonton
City of Medicine Hat
City of Red Deer

Saskatchewan
City of Regina
City of Saskatoon

Manitoba
City of Brandon
City of Winnipeg

Ontario
City of Barrie
City of Elliot Lake
City of Guelph
City of Hamilton
City of Kitchener
City of London
City of Milton
City of Mississauga
City of Ottawa
City of Pickering
City of Port Colborne
City of Toronto
City of Waterloo
City of Woodstock

New Brunswick
City of Fredericton
City of Saint John

Prince Edward Island
City of Summerside

Yukon
City of Whitehorse

Case Study:
City of Edmonton

Due to its extensive use of social media tools and its success with building social media into everyday communications with residents, a case study was conducted on the city of Edmonton.

The case study provides a wealth of knowledge about how the city of Edmonton uses social media tools and its subsequent successes and challenges which have been helpful to the City of Kitchener during the development of this strategy. Additionally, the case study indicates that Kitchener has taken a similar approach to its social media presence, including:

- Starting small. Researching which social media tools are most popular among citizens and building them into communications efforts.
- Valuing consistency of messaging and subsequently monitoring and maintaining sites – and requests for new sites – through their corporate communications department.
- Combining the use of social media with a newly redesigned website to support it.
- Putting guidelines/policies in place for use of social media for corporate/business purposes

Recommended Online Tools

After extensive research into a wide range of social media tools, the Online Communications Strategy project team is recommending that a single corporate account or channel be established for use of the following social media tools:

- Facebook
- Twitter
- YouTube
- Flickr
- LinkedIn

Additionally, it is recommended that the city use the following online tools for information sharing purposes:

- Kijiji for advertising purposes
- E-newsletters
- Email signatures

The use of these particular tools is recommended based on several factors including sheer volume of users, popularity with the general public and ease of use. Specific recommendations for each tool are included in the appropriate section.

Additionally, it is important to note that the corporate use of social media tools is only as effective as the city's ability to establish and grow its fan base for each tool. The city will also use its traditional communication tools to build its online base of followers.

Recommendation:

10. That a comprehensive communications and marketing plan be developed and implemented, by the end of 2010, to make residents and other stakeholders aware of the city's use of these social media sites and to encourage them to stay informed about the city through those networks.

Facebook

Founded in February 2004, Facebook is a website that essentially represents the digital mapping of a person's real-world connections.

Users can create profiles, connect with friends, family and co-workers, create profiles for themselves with photos, lists of personal interests, contact information and other personal information. Communicating with friends and other users can be done through private or public messages (called status updates) or a chat feature. Users can also create and join interest groups and "like pages" (formerly called "fan pages" until April 19, 2010), some of which are maintained by organizations, including businesses and government, as a means of advertising, promotions or information sharing.

Over the past year, Facebook's membership has more than doubled, reaching 400 million by February, 2010.

Internet users worldwide spent more than five-and-a-half hours a month on social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter in December 2009, an 82 per cent increase over the previous year, according to the Nielsen Company research firm.

Facebook and the City of Kitchener

For the past year, the City of Kitchener has maintained a single corporate Facebook page where interested residents can choose to follow daily status updates that share information and/or photographs of events, projects and decisions of Council.

Status updates for the corporate Facebook page are created and posted daily – often 2-3 times daily – by staff of the Communications and Marketing Division to inform page fans about upcoming city events, decisions of council, project statuses, community consultations, job opportunities, road closures etc. The status updates are created from information collected from across city divisions, departments and enterprises or obtained from the city's website.

The general public is welcome and encouraged to add comments to the city's page. Staff monitor the page a minimum of every two hours daily to ensure that no inappropriate content is posted. Over the past year, inappropriate content has only been posted (and removed) twice – once because it was sexually explicit and once because it advertised a local company. Clear criteria – a complete Facebook Disclaimer (Appendix F) – which identifies what consitutes inapproriate content is posted on the city's Facebook page.

To date, the page has been a positive addition to the city's communication tools – providing a quick, cost effective way to both provide information to community stakeholders in a way they have identified that they want to receive it. Often, followers "like" the city's status updates, they take the time to add a comment or they ask questions which are promptly answered. When followers engage in any of these activities, that information is shared with their network of friends – an online version of word of mouth which often generates even more interest.

Over the past several months, the amount of activity generated by followers of the city's Facebook page has increased significantly.

Facebook Demographics:

Statistics available for the City of Kitchener's Facebook page for the month of April 2010 indicate:

- 42% of the page's followers are male; 58% are female.
- Facebook followers in terms of age:
  - o 6% are 13-17
  - o 20% are 18-24
  - o 30% are 25-34
  - o 24% are 35-44
  - o 14% are 45-54
  - o 5% are 55-plus

- 696 followers are living in Canada; 489 are living in Kitchener; 78 are living in the United States.

- The city has: 34 followers from Toronto; 33 from San Antonio, Texas; 20 from Waterloo and 12 from Mississauga.

> **A page impression**
>
> is counted each time a specific page within a website is viewed.
>
> **Pay per click**
>
> is a pricing model that is based on the number of times an advertisement is clicked on.

Advertising on Facebook

Research was also completed into the potential for the corporation to use Facebook advertising. Incredible opportunities exist to target very specific demographics in terms of birthdate, location, interests, gender, keywords, education, workplace, raltionship, language and new friends – or any combination of these elements.

Advertising rates are relatively inexpensive – advertisers choose to pay per click or per impression with costs as low as $0.20 to $0.30 per click and $0.09 to $0.14 per impression. Additionally, due to the limited format for advertising, ads can be set up easily and they begin to appear on the pages of targeted users almost immediately.

To date, the City of Kitchener has somel experience with Facebook advertising. In the past year, city staff has used used Facebook advertising as an element within six advertising campaigns and have found it to be very cost efficient and successful in meeting their objectives each time.

For example, 15% of the youth attendees at the design meetings for the skateboard park at McLennan Park indicated that they heard about the meeting on Facebook. Addtionally, the Aud's Rookie Camp advertising on Facebook generated more than 2.8 million page impressions.

Research indicates that the true value and effectiveness of Facebook advertising is variable depending on what is being advertised. Due to its low cost, low risk and relative ease of use, organizations continue to experiment with it. The City of Kitchener is likely to experiment with recruitment advertising in the future.

Aside from that, Communications and Marketing Division staff, in collaboration with clients, will consider and potentially recommend Facebook advertising for individual projects or events going forward – based on project type, scope, size, audience and goals and objectives.

Measuring the Success of Facebook

Measuring the success of social media tools like Facebook requires a new way of thinking. Where once the effectiveness of the tool may have been judged solely by the number of fans it attracted, today that is not the only important measurement. Others include:

- The quality of the conversation the page is generating – the number of "likes", the number of comments generated, the quality of the conversation and whether fan insights later led to change or action. (Monitored through page Insights reports.)

- The momentum effect – people telling others resulting in either new followers or mentions on other outposts (blogs, Twitter etc.) (Monitored through Google Alerts, Twitter feeds, event tracking to learn where patrons heard about the event.)

- The growing and changing demographics – monitoring who the page is attracting and potentially targeting messaging to those groups or targeting efforts to recruit under-represented groups. (Monitored through page Insights reports.)

"Companies believe that because they're on Facebook or Twitter that they've evolved. Not true. You only evolve by what people do with it – reading it, sharing it, commenting on it. True evolution only comes from people using your information and engaging in conversation with you."

Mitch Joel,
social media expert,
author of Six Pixels of
Separation, April 2010

Facebook Recommendations:

11. **That the City of Kitchener provide a single, comprehensive corporate Facebook 'fan page' that is monitored and maintained by staff in the Corporate Communications and Marketing Division on a daily basis, and which is used to inform and educate residents and other stakeholders, as well as engage them in conversation about city business.**

12. **That the City of Kitchener endorse the use of Facebook Ads for reaching specific target audiences and demographics and to achieve the goals and objectives identified within supporting communications and marketing plans.**

Twitter

Twitter, created in 2006, is a free social networking/microblogging service that enables people to communicate in a short and simple way that can be broadcasted to the world.

The platform enables its users to send and read messages known as "tweets" – text-based messages of up to 140 characters displayed on the author's profile page and delivered to the author's subscribers, also known as followers. It attempts to tell people what they care about as it is happening in the world.

Between 2008 and 2009, Twitter recorded 1382% growth in users. In April 2010, there were more than 106 million users registered worldwide.

One of the most significant benefits of the corporate use of Twitter are that it provides an easy way to share information with engaged followers who have selected the City of Kitchener as a source of information they value. In fact, research indicates that Twitter – and other social media outlets like Facebook – is overtaking traditional media outlets as a source the public turns to for breaking news.

The benefits of using Twitter include:

- It can break news faster than other sources.
- It can augment customer service efforts.
- It is a quick, simple and cost effective way to communicate with engaged followers who have selected the City of Kitchener as a source of information they value.
- Updates can be synchronized with the city's Facebook page.

Twitter and the City of Kitchener

Based on the experience of other Canadian municipalities currently using Twitter, and similar to the recommended approach to Facebook, this strategy recommends the establishment of a single official Twitter account from which information about all city programs, services, initiatives, projects and decisions can be shared.

A single corporate account will enable the city to provide information to stakeholders in yet another way that is becoming increasingly popular among residents. While it is impossible to know how many Kitchener-based Twitter users there are – because specific demographic information is not yet available – with the exponential growth of the platform worldwide, it is reasonable to expect that it is also used by a significant segment of the Kitchener population.

Many local organizations – including the Waterloo Regional Police, CTV, Waterloo Regional Police Service and the Waterloo Region District School Board are already on Twitter and enjoy significant followings.

How does Twitter work?

Research indicates that the most effective use of Twitter by corporations and organizations is to have real people "tweeting" about their business. Many corporations – like Dell, IBM and Ford Motor Company – empower their staff to use Twitter and, as a result, they enjoy significant presences there. Locally, the city of Guelph has a corporate Twitter account, but Mayor Karen Farbridge also Twitters regularly on behalf of the city.

Based on the research, the city could take one of two approaches to its Twitter feed.

1. Develop a corporate Twitter feed that is managed by a real person, identified by photograph and position that "tweets" on behalf of the city. Research indicates that people follow people – they prefer to deal with a real person, rather than an anonymous corporate entity.

2. Develop a corporate Twitter feed that uses the city logo or crest in place of a photograph and where "tweets" are sent out anonymously on behalf of the corporation. Research into what most other Canadian cities are doing currently on Twitter demonstrates that this is the approach many Canadian cities take.

Some Canadian cities on Twitter:

City of Guelph
City of Ottawa
City of Vancouver
City of Windsor
City of Edmonton
City of Calgary
City of Regina
City of Leduc
City of Stratford
City of Waterloo
City of Kelowna
Yukon Government

While most of the cities researched that have chosen to use Twitter anonymously have been effective in developing a significant Twitter following, through advertising and encouraging new followers to join them, the number of followers the cities enjoy is not necessarily the most important measurement of success.

As important as the quantity of followers achieved, is the quality of the engagement – the number of conversations and responses generated from status updates and the number of "retweets" and "hash tags" (people who pass on your information) generated.

Research demonstrates that quality engagement with community stakeholders is more likely to occur when followers can relate to and engage in dialogue with an identifiable, real person than it is with an anonymous corporate brand that is viewed as only pushing information out.

For this reason, and because it will centralize the responsibility for Twitter and ensure consistent corporate messaging, the Online Communications Strategy recommends that once the strategy has been approved by Council, that the City of Kitchener establish a one-year pilot Twitter feed that is maintained by a single, identifiable individual – the Director of Corporate Communications and Marketing.

After one year, the Twitter feed will be reviewed to determine its effectiveness in communicating to and engaging with residents and other community stakeholders.

Twitter Demographics:

While there is significant data available about Twitter usage overall, unlike Facebook demographics, there is very little Canada or Kitchener specific data available currently from Twitter.

One of the interesting highlights of the demographic data however, is that Twitter is popular among the 18-34 age group. Additionally, a rapidly growing portion of Twitter's audience the 35-49 age demographic – they comprise nearly 42% of the entire audience, while another 47% of users are 18-34. The average Twitter account holder visits 14 times per month.

General Twitter demographic also shows that:

- 80% of Twitter usage is on mobile devices.
- 74% of users have no children at home.
- 72.5% of users joined Twitter in 2009.
- 65% of Twitter users are under 25; the median age of Twitter users is 31.
- 53% of Twitter users are female; 47% male.
- 35% of users live in urban areas.
- There are more than 4 million visits to Twitter monthly.
- 4.3% of Twitter users are Canadian – compared to 60.6% American.
- The most Twitter activity happens between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m.

    Sysomos study, August 2009

Advertising on Twitter

Advertising on Twitter is currently in its infancy. In fact, the scope of the research for this strategy did not include advertising on Twitter because there were previously no advertising opportunities available. Twitter is beginning to introduce advertising features which will be explored in greater depth in future iterations of the strategy.

Measuring the success of Twitter

Measuring the success of the one-year pilot of a single corporate Twitter account will require an approach similar to that of measuring the success of Facebook. Measures of effectiveness and success will include:

• The momentum effect/ the number of "retweets" – People telling others resulting in either new followers or mentions on other outposts (blogs, Twitter etc.) (Monitored through the Twitter feed, event tracking to learn where patrons heard about the event.)
• The number of hash tags used – Hashtags are a form of passing on information. People may use hashtags (like #cityofkitchener) when talking about a city Twitter post. The tag enables others to click on it and jump immediately to the conversation. (Hashtags are trackable through hashtags.org or via Google Analytics.)
• Number of followers attracted.
• The quality of the conversation the Twitter feeds are generating – the number of comments, replies, queries and the overall quality of the conversation. (Monitored through records management practices.)
• Clicks on links the city has posted in its feeds. (Trackable through Google Analytics)

Twitter Recommendations:

13. That, on a one year pilot, the City of Kitchener create a single, corporate Twitter feed that is maintained by a single, identifiable individual, the Director of Corporate Communications and Marketing.

14. That a review of the effectiveness of a corporate Twitter feed be conducted one year from its initiation, to determine whether or not to continue the use of this tool, or whether changes are required.

YouTube

YouTube, created in 2005, is a video sharing website where users can upload, watch and share videos. YouTube has grown to become the second largest search engine in the world – today, it features more than 100 million videos posted by the general public.

According to ComScore, Canada is number one in the world for online video viewing and Canadians view 10 hours of online video on average per month – up 53% since February 2008.

With the popularity of YouTube and online videosharing growing exponentially, organizations, including cities across Canada and the world, are beginning to take advantage of its many benefits which include:

- Cost effectiveness – registering for a YouTube channel is free.
- Innovative new way to inform and engage an audience that has sought us out.
- Interactivity – video viewers can comment on videos or even record and post a video response.
- RSS feeds – users can subscribe to a City of Kitchener RSS feed that automatically downloads videos in categories they are interested in.
- Content accessibility – users can view video on web pages outside of the site and on mobile phones.
- Unlimited content can be uploaded.

YouTube and the City of Kitchener

The City of Kitchener currently has a "downtownkitchener" YouTube channel. Established in recent months by the city's economic development team, the channel currently has three videos uploaded to it, including the original downtown Kitchener video created by the city – and a contracted videographer – in 2007, which has had 7,898 views.

Additionally, many other videos about Kitchener are also posted to YouTube – all are raw, not professional, videos created by the general public – however these videos are posted individually and do not appear on the city's channel.

Other Canadian cities who are working with YouTube include the city of Edmonton which has had its own YouTube channel since the spring of 2009 – it currently features 57 videos. Additionally, the city of Calgary has a YouTube channel which features more than 100 uploads about city events and programs. Additionally, the city of Edmonton shoots a radio show each week, many of which are recorded and uploaded to YouTube. Both cities use the services of contract videographers to create YouTube videos.

Quick Facts

"If YouTube was Hollywood, there would be enough material to release 60,000 films each week."

"You can be tempted to post anything and everything, but you must remember, the average viewer isn't always interested in a bunch of talking heads. You have to make sure your content is vibrant and valuable."

*Maria McGowan,
Greater Halifax
Partnership*

Due to factors including the sheer volume of people using the platform – including local residents – the ease of use and its cost effectiveness, YouTube is recommended for further corporate use by the City of Kitchener. As a starting point, the city would continue to use the established YouTube channel to aggregate any videos created by city staff. In the future, the corporation would look to more proactively create videos.

Potential uses could include broadcasting special events in the downtown, promoting city programs, highlighting new developments and projects and sharing videos related to the city's enterprises, including golf courses, The Aud and the Kitchener Market.

How does YouTube work?

YouTube uses Adobe Flash video technology to display a wide variety of user-generated video content, including movie clips, TV clips, and music videos, as well as amateur content such as video blogging and short original videos. Unregistered users can watch the videos, while registered users are permitted to upload an unlimited number of videos.

YouTube Demographics:

- YouTube is ranked the fourth most visited website on the Internet, behind Google, Yahoo and Facebook.
- YouTube users:
    - o 18% are under 18
    - o 20% are 18-34
    - o 19% are 35-44
    - o 21% are 45-54
    - o 21% are 55+
- 34% of Kitchener residents say they watch videos on YouTube or visit photo sharing sites like Flickr daily or weekly.

Advertising on YouTube

During the course of the research for the strategy, advertising on YouTube was also examined for its potential use by the city however, the cost was found to be prohibitive. Additionally, the city can create a significant presence for itself online for free through establishing city-specific channels.

Measuring the success of YouTube

YouTube provides excellent analytics on a variety of aspects of individual videos. Measuring the success of the effectiveness of the city's corporate YouTube channel will include an analysis of the following statistics:

- Video views
- Video ratings
- Video comments
- Number of times favourited.
- Links to the video
- Number of times the video was embedded on another website or blog

YouTube Recommendations:

15. That the City of Kitchener create a corporate YouTube channel for posting all videos showcasing Kitchener that is managed by Corporate Communications and Marketing staff and that content only publish at the sole discretion of the city.

16. That the City of Kitchener develop and implement a full communications and marketing plan focused on encouraging staff, citizens and other stakeholders to create and submit video material for posting on the city's YouTube channel.
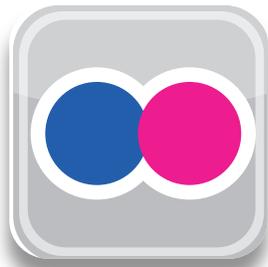
Flickr

Launched in 2004, Flickr, owned by Yahoo, is one of the most popular image and video hosting websites and online communities in the world. Flickr offers its users a website where they can create free accounts that let them store, share, and explore digital photos. Flickr is also an online community – a social networking site – whose members create their own profiles, share and discuss photography, and enjoy mutual interests. Additionally, the platform is widely used by bloggers to host images that they embed into blogs and other social media.

Flickr has two main goals: helping people make their content available to the people that matter the most to them, and enabling photo and video organization in new ways.

Flickr and the City of Kitchener

The City of Kitchener specifically looked at Flickr for its potential to act as an external, central database that can be used to host, catalogue and track images for use primarily on the city's website and in its publications. It was also explored for its potential to be used as a source of photography from external sources (citizens) who can be contacted in order to gain permission to use photographs they have posted of the city.

The use of Flickr provides many benefits, including:

- Creates a centralized, organized, off-site image bank.
  Raises awareness of the city's current activities using photos or video.
- Engage an audience in discussion about city content.
- Enhance information about existing collections of visual content, such as historic photos.
- Allows the audience to easily browse, view, and download content.
- Provides cost-effective (free) access to photographs from multiple external sources that can, with permission, be used by the city on its website and/or in publications.
- Easy to use – photographs are easily uploaded to the site; photographers with photos the city wants to use can be contacted for permission.
- Use of tagging and keywords related to photos enables "city" photos to be found more easily.
- Creative commons licensing provides a flexible range of protections and freedoms for photographers.

Flickr can also improve search engine results for the city. Flickr's recent integration within Yahoo! Image Search also means that Flickr pictures are displayed when anyone uses Yahoo to search for images on specific topics. HitWise's data shows that this has clearly lead to the increased and continued adoption of Flickr by new users.

Flickr's photos are also listed in Google's search results as well as various other portals, websites and blogs which pull in and display public Flickr pictures via RSS. All of these sources direct visitors to individual photo pages and each of them can be funneled to the city's website.

How does Flickr work?

Flickr provides a limited version of its service for free, and a "pro" service for $24.95 per year. The free account shows the 200 most recently uploaded photos, limits the photo upload size, and allows for limited organization of content. The pro account offers unlimited uploads and storage, as well as greater control over organization and statistics on the account.

Registration for a Flickr account is simple and free. Once an account has been established, Flickr enables users to upload and organize their photos. Flickr asks members to organize their images using tags – or keywords – that enables them to be more easily categorized and searched by others.

Flickr also enables users to choose the level of licensing on their photos. Creative Commons licensing enables others to potentially use the city's photos, with appropriate permissions, for their projects. Similarly, the city may locate individual users, or user groups, that will allow the use of their photos on the city's website and/or in publications – as long as they follow the license restrictions.

The platform also enables the creation of groups of photographers with similar interests or who specialize in photographing specific places. Joining relevant groups will increase exposure of the city's presence and content on Flickr. Currently, there are several groups related to the City of Kitchener that will be explored to determine whether the city should become a member, including: Kitchener-Waterloo, Kitchener-Waterloo Photographers, Waterloo Region and the Kitchener-Waterloo Photo Group.

Flickr Demographics:

- Flickr currently hosts more than four billion images and more than 23 million users.
- Flickr users are 53% male and 47% female.
- 38% of uses are 18-34 (largest age group demographic).
- In 2009, Flickr was the 7th most visited social networking website.
- 55.1 % of people online worldwide are uploading photos.

Measuring Flickr's Success

As with all social media tools, it is important to think broadly, and keep the long-term impact and goals in mind, when choosing how to evaluate the city's use of Flickr and defining success. Actively using Flickr can yield powerful rewards – that may be difficult to measure –such as creating goodwill, generating awareness of the city's services, and developing a deeper understanding of the audience.

Additionally, Flickr provides statistics about view counts and referrers to users with pro accounts including daily aggregate views on accounts and 28-day tracking. Additional measures of success will include:

- Number of photos acquired from external sources.
- Number of photos shared with external sources/ request to use city photos.
- Photo views.
- Comments on photo content.

These numbers will be attained through consistent monitoring of the use of the photos city's Flickr account, photos and any groups

Flickr Recommendations:

15. That the City of Kitchener create a corporate YouTube channel for posting all videos showcasing Kitchener that is managed by Corporate Communications and Marketing staff and that content only publish at the sole discretion of the city.

16. That the City of Kitchener develop and implement a full communications and marketing plan focused on encouraging staff, citizens and other stakeholders to create and submit video material for posting on the city's YouTube channel.

Linked In

Launched in 2003, LinkedIn is a business-oriented social networking tool that enables users to find connections to fellow colleagues and professionals, recommended job candidates, industry experts and business partners. Essentially, the site allows registered users to maintain a list of contact details of people they know and trust in business.

Built on these trusted connections and relationships, LinkedIn has established the world's largest and most powerful online community of professionals. Reportedly growing by a new member every second, in April 2010, LinkedIn reported more than 65 million users around the world.

LinkedIn and the City of Kitchener

The City of Kitchener examined LinkedIn – specifically its advertising applications – for their potential use in online recruitment efforts. With the network growing exponentially and being primarily used by affluent and well-educated professionals who typically work in senior management roles, the network is recognized as a promising source for new talent for the City of Kitchener.

Benefits to the city's use of LinkedIn include:

- Access to a wider range of talented professionals in a cost-effective manner.
- Potential to target specific candidates and/or industry streams.
- Ads can be published almost immediately – no design or publication period required.
- Increased traffic on the city's website – ads drive candidates to the site.
- Establishing a reputation for the city as a forward-thinking employer of choice.

How does LinkedIn work?

The primary purpose of LinkedIn is to allow registered users to maintain a list of contact details of people they know and trust in business. Users create a professional profile about themselves that is visible to their "connections." Additionally, LinkedIn features paid accounts that enable users to use more advanced tools to locate connections.

Through their personal networks, users can:

- Manage the information that's publicly available about them as professional.
- Find and be introduced to potential clients, service providers, and subject experts who come recommended.
- Create and collaborate on projects, gather data, share files and solve problems with other professionals or colleagues.
- Be found for business opportunities and find potential partners.
- Gain new insights from discussions with likeminded professionals in private group settings.
- Discover inside connections that can help land jobs.
- Post and distribute job listings to find the best talent for their company.

Additionally:

- With very little effort or expense – depending on the advertising method selected – employers can quickly and easily list jobs and search for potential candidates.
- Job seekers can review the profile of hiring managers and discover which of their existing contacts can introduce them.
- LinkedIn allows users to research companies with which they may be interested in working.

LinkedIn follows strict privacy guidelines wherein all connections made are mutually confirmed and individuals only appear within the network with their explicit consent. This "gated-access approach" is intended to build trust among the service's users.

Aside from its social networking function however, LinkedIn also provides a wide range online recruiting and advertising opportunities for business. The platform serves as an effective medium by which both employers and job seekers can review professional information about one another and, increasingly, LinkedIn advertising and networking is being used by organizations as part of their online recruitment strategies.

Advertisements can be set up easily and quickly – requiring no design work – via an online form. More information about the advertising possibilities for the City of Kitchener on LinkedIn is available in the "Advertising on LinkedIn" section.

Demographics

LinkedIn provides access to literally millions of ambitious and influential professionals. Demographic information available for the platform shows that users tend to be affluent, educated decision makers.

- Average user is 41.
- 64% of users worldwide are male.
- 80% are college graduates.
- 50% are decision makers within their companies – 34% are mid-senior level managers; 15% are vice-presidents or presidents/CAOs of their companies.
- Average annual income of users: $109,703.

Advertising on LinkedIn

During the research for this Online Communications Strategy, several advertising venues within the LinkedIn platform were explored for use, including:

- **LinkedIn Recruiter** – most popular option which provides a wide search for appropriate candidates and automatically matches candidate talents to job descriptions.
  Not recommended: cost prohibitive.

- **Content Ads** – pre-sized ads can include text, video, twitter, blogs, RSS feeds.
  Cost is based on the number of clicks on the ad.
  Not recommended: cost prohibitive.

- **Direct Ads** – allows advertisers to reach a targeted professional audience. Contains lines of text, small logo and link to the advertiser's profile on LinkedIn. *Not recommended: cannot be used for recruiting – only general advertising.*

- **Sponsorships** – to gain exposure, companies can sponsor areas on LinkedIn where professionals congregate. *Not recommended: potentially not localized enough to be of value, cost prohibitive.*

- **Job Slot** – a posting format that allows for available jobs to be rotated throughout the month. *Not recommended: only one slot provides limited exposure.*

While several of the advertising options are not recommended city use, postings to two different forms of LinkedIn job boards are recommended, including:

1. **Main Job Board** – which enables jobs to be posted through a user's profile and costs $195 US per job. Users can also purchase job credits which reduce the cost of advertising.

2. Job boards related to specific career streams – enable the user to post specific jobs to boards that are maintained by specific career-based interest groups.

Due to the reasonably low cost and wide reach offered by LinkedIn job boards, Human Resources staff will include the use of these job boards in recommendations to hiring managers for online recruiting options

"Social networking sites like LinkedIn bring the kind of interaction that professionals enjoy in 'live' business, industry, professional, civic, religious, charitable and personal interest groups onto the Internet – and supercharge it."

Kevin O'Keefe, president of Lexblog

Measuring the Success of LinkedIn

As with Flickr and other social media tools, the benefits from the use of LinkedIn for recruitment purposes can, at times, be difficult to measure. Benefits will inevitably include creating goodwill, generating awareness of the city and promoting job vacancies to a wide range of professionals. Other measures of success will be:

- The number of applications generated through job board postings on LinkedIn.
- The number of applications that lead to subsequent interviews and/or hirings.

Analytics of these numbers will be monitored by LinkedIn statistics and through the city's own automated tracking system (hiring desk).

Recommendations:

19. That the City of Kitchener use LinkedIn's job boards for online recruitment purposes when deemed appropriate for the position being advertised.

Kijiji

Launched in Quebec in 2005, Kijiji has become Canada's most popular free, local classifieds site. Similar to CraigsList, Kijiji offers a centralized, convenient and easy way for people in the same city to buy, sell and trade items – or to discuss topics of interest or just connect to each other.

The main difference between Craigslist, which is not recommended for use by the city, and Kijiji is that Kijiji is localized. A popular Kitchener/Waterloo/Cambridge site exists.

Kijiji and the City of Kitchener

Because the site tends to have a large "jobs" section, Kijiji was explored by the City of Kitchener for its advertising potential for online recruiting purposes. To date, the city has not used Kijiji for this purpose however; it could provide benefits in the future including:

- Quick and easy way to post specific job vacancies.
- Low-cost way to reach a significant segment of the local population – depending on type of advertising selected.
- Excellent exposure to job seekers – the job section is popular. Many businesses across Canada use it to publicize specific vacancies.
- Targeting of job seekers by geographic region and category (i.e. jobs)

Additionally, the City of Kitchener may occasionally find Kijiji useful for the promotion of specific events.

How Does Kjiji work?

Advertisers place word ads using an online form on the Kijiji site, and choose from a variety of ad types – some that have a cost associated with them, including:

- Large format display-type ads which are sold based on the number of ad impressions (clicks on the ad) that are purchased.
  Not recommended: Category-specific classified advertising will suffice.
- Banner ads – minimum of $2,500 must be spent.
  Not recommended: Cost prohibitive.
- Free: Home page advertising within a specific category.
  Recommended if appropriate due to its cost effectiveness.

Demographics:

- More than 8 million people use Kijiji every month.
- Kijiji networks exist in more than 100 Canadian cities from coast to coast.
- Ontario has the most Kijiji networks – with 36 – including Kitchener/Waterloo/Cambridge.
- 88.3 per cent of the traffic to Kijiji sites is from Canada.
- The audience is primarily 35-64 year olds.
- Even split between male and female users.

Measuring the Success of Kijiji:

The intention is that Kijiji would be used for specific online recruitment efforts, including advertising the city's job pool, and other opportunities. Measures of its success in those efforts will be:

- The number of applications generated through job board postings on Kijiji.
- The number of applications that lead to subsequent interviews and/or hirings.

These statistics will be monitored and obtained through the city's automated tracking system, which tracks where applications originated from.

Recommendation:
20. That Kijiji be used for specific online recruitment purposes when deemed appropriate by the HR Division

Email Newsletters

An email newsletter, which members of the public subscribe to from the city's website, can be a powerful marketing and communications tool and an important way to communicate with people on the Internet.

One of the greatest benefits of e-newsletters is that they are targeted to a receptive audience that has subscribed because they value the city as an important source of news and information. Additionally, e-newsletters open opportunities for citizens to interact with the city and to promote dialogue, and they provide instantaneous trackable results for marketing campaigns when linked to a website.

Research indicates that users tend to be loyal to e-newsletters. While they tend to glance at websites when they need to accomplish something or to find the answer to a specific question, in contrast, e-newsletters feel personal because they arrive in users' inboxes, and users have an ongoing relationship with them.

E-newsletters also have a social aspect to them, as users often forward them to colleagues and friends. The positive aspect of this emotional relationship is that newsletters can create much more of a bond between users and a company than a website can.

Research into why people tend to value newsletters indicates three key reasons, including:

- Informative: They keep users up to date on what is happening.
- Convenient: They're delivered straight to the user's information central and require no further action beyond a simple click.
- Timely: They offer current information and real-time delivery.

Email Newsletters and the City of Kitchener

In recent years, email marketing – including the use of e-mail newsletters – has become an increasingly popular channel for many companies. This trend is the result of several factors, such as reduced cost, increased speed of delivery, ease-of-use and the ability to personalize marketing communications, leading to better levels of customer service.

What are Other Cities Doing?

Charlottetown Monthly, general city content.

Edmonton Bi-weekly, promoting the farmers' market.

Calgary Bi-weekly, users only receive information on topics they have chosen.

Guelph, Users choose from general news, economic development or business, or city jobs.

Richmond Hill Monthly, information about one specific program only.

Cambridge and Mississauga Uses RSS feeds rather than a newsletter. Users sign up on the website for feeds they are interested in – when new news is posted on that topic, it is sent to them.

Currently, the City of Kitchener offers a single e-newsletter – "Downtown E-vents" – which is delivered weekly to a database of 422 subscribers. Launched in 2005, the newsletter shares information about all of the special events and activities happening in the downtown.

Additionally, as part of the redesign of the city's website, a new corporate e-newsletter for people who want to sign-up to receive city information via email is being developed. In May 2010, the corporate website committee reviewed and finalized the look and feel for the new e-newsletter, which will share information about a wide range of city projects, initiatives, events and venues.

Consolidating the city's efforts into a single e-newsletter will enable the city to centralize the responsibility for the creation and distribution of the newsletter within the Corporate Communications and Marketing Division and to provide information consistent with all other social media tools to subscribers on a timely basis – using existing staff resources.

It is also important to note that e-newsletters are only one type of email marketing. Email promotions – generally distributed through lists of acquired email addresses of consenting participants – are another type of this marketing that is currently used, on occasion by the city's enterprise units. Email promotions are essentially emails which focus on getting the recipient to take immediate action – to sign up, download, or purchase something online. They are quick and easy to put together and require little time and effort, while an e-newsletters focus on loyalty, long-term impact and influence and requires significantly more staff and time resources.

How do Email Newsletters Work?

An e-newsletter containing information from across city departments and enterprises would be created once every two weeks by staff within the Corporate Communications and Marketing Division. It will provide a few key details on important projects, initiatives, events, enterprise unit promotions, before driving the subscriber to the city's main website, or enterprise websites, for more information. Users will be able to subscribe to the e-newsletter on the city's website and have it delivered directly to their inbox.

It is important to note that, in recent years, email newsletters have begun to come into direct competition with another new technology, specifically RSS feeds. RSS feeds – Really Simple Syndication – enables users to select topics of interest to them on a website, like the city's, and automatically receive new information whenever the website is updated on those specific topics. The city's newly redesigned website, expected to be relaunched in the summer of 2010, will include the option for users to sign up for RSS feeds on specific topics.

At this time, RSS Feeds are beginning to grow in popularity locally, however they have not reached the point of widespread use in Kitchener. Only 12% of Kitchener residents identified in the 2009 Environics Survey that they use RSS feeds daily or weekly. Through its research, the project team continues to believe that email newsletters are a valuable tool in reaching out to the general public which can be complementary to RSS feeds.

E-mail Newsletter Demographics

Availability of demographic information about the use of e-mail newsletters is not widely available. Research does however show that:

- 40% of Internet users identify that the most valuable e-newsletters provide them with information about:
  - o Work related news or activities
  - o Prices and sales
  - o Personal hobbies or interests
  - o Events, deadlines, important dates.

- 69% of users said that they look forward to receiving at least one newsletter, and most users said a newsletter had become part of their routine.

Neilson Norman Group, 2006

Measuring the Success of Email Newsletters

Measures of its success in the city's email newsletter efforts will include:

- Number of people subscribed to the newsletter.
- Number of people who unsubscribe annually.
- Increased website traffic due to use of the links from the e-newsletter
- Increased numbers of people identifying the e-newsletter as where they hear about city events.

Recommendation:
21. That the Corporate Communications and Marketing Division develop and maintain a single, corporate e-newsletter for citizens and other stakeholders and that the potential for other topic and enterprise specific e-newsletters be examined before the end of 2010.

Email signatures

Email signatures are likened to business cards which provide the context (job, title, organization) of the sender and enriches the recipient's understanding of the message. Research indicates that email signatures within an organization can be used most effectively if they are standardized and include consistent information.

Consistent email signatures within an organization are recommended because they provide a professional appearance for the organization builds the organization's brand or identity and serves as a "cognitive flag" – enabling email recipients to make connections among emails received from various members of one organization.

According to the research, the most effective email signatures including the following:

- Name
- Title
- Organization
- Phone Number
- Web Address

Optional elements include:

- Tagline – organizational or related to a specific event or campaign

- Graphic elements such as a horizontal line to distinguish the signature line from the rest of the email

Consider this…

If an organization has 1,000 employees using email, each of whom sends 10 emails per day outside of the organization, then (assuming 250 business days annually) that's 2.5 million taglines or ads distributed annually at no extra cost.

Currently, the City of Kitchener does not have a standard format or template for its employee email signatures. To ensure consistency, professional appearance and build corporate identity, it is recommended that the city develop a formal email signature policy that standardizes the information which must appear and examines and makes recommendations about the personalization of signature lines.

Recommendation:

22. **That the City of Kitchener develop a formal corporate email signature policy that takes into consideration, but not be limited to: font type, size and colour, standard information which must appear and the appropriateness of taglines and quotes used by individual employees.**

Ongoing
Review of Effectiveness

One of the biggest challenges organizations face with using social media tools, like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube for their online campaigns is measuring the effectiveness of their efforts.

Social media requires time, resources, and commitment in order to achieve success and so it is important to understand what benefit the city is receiving in return for these efforts and whether or not the tools being used continue to be effective.

Additionally, monitoring the effectiveness of our social media efforts ensures the city is using the right tools, the right way – and that we are staying on top of new tools and emerging trends and using them to make adjustments to our approach when required.

Because social media is still so new, no specific standards for measuring the effectiveness of each tool have been developed though best practices do exist and will be implemented for social media tools the city chooses to adopt.

In addition, the following recommendations will ensure that the city's work and progress on the recommendations contained within the Online Communications Strategy will be monitored, evaluated and reported on regularly.

Recommendations

23. That the Corporate Communications and Marketing Division engage its customers in the development of specific measurements for all online communications tools used by the city and that those measurements are focused on measuring the effectiveness and cost/benefit of each tool.

24. That the city's measurements for the effectiveness of online communications be added to the city's annual business planning process and the collection of key performance indicators.

25. That the Online Communications Strategy team conduct a review – annually – of the effectiveness of online tools being used by the city as well as any emerging technologies or social media sites identified for potential future use.

26. That the addition of any online communications tools or social media sites, for use by the city, be approved by the Corporate Management Team prior to their implementation.

Additionally, the Director of Corporate Communications and Marketing will receive an aggregated quarterly report about the successes, challenges, trends and ongoing effectiveness of social media tools for corporate use. An annual social media report will also be compiled and presented to the city's Corporate Management Team.

Online Tools
for Future Consideration

Research into best practices and the experiences of other municipalities that are experimenting with and using social media demonstrate the need to "start small" and use a few tools well, as opposed to using all tools at once.

As a result, while the Online Communications Strategy recommends the corporate use of several social media tools, several other tools have been recommended for future consideration. The tools for future consideration – most of which require further research – will be reviewed annually to determine whether or not they will be adopted for use by the city.

Corporate blog

A blog, short for "web log", is like an online journal. A blog is a frequently updated, personal website featuring diary-type commentary and links to articles on other websites. Blogs range from the personal to the political, and can focus on one narrow subject or a whole range of subjects.

While there are benefits to corporate blogs including opening the lines of communication between city government and residents, developing relationships and engaged followers and receiving feedback, an official corporate blog is not recommended at this time due to the need to identify and address issues including the staff resources required to maintain and monitor it.

Recommendation

27. That the City of Kitchener not pursue the use of a corporate blog for communicating with citizens and other stakeholders until such time as further investigation into the corporation's appetite for use of this tool is discussed further with senior management, including identifying the staff resource who might write, maintain and monitor the corporate blog.

Podcasting

Podcasting is a free service that allows Internet users to pull audio files (typically MP3 files) from a podcasting website to listen to on their computers or personal digital audio players. It essentially allows anyone with recording software and a computer to hook up to become a journalist, writer, recording artist, critic or talk show host.

Podcasting is under future consideration for use by the City of Kitchener, due to its relevant ease of use. It could be used externally to record and promote important special events, or council meetings, the State of the city Address, facility tours and updates on major city

projects. Internally, podcasting could play an important role in internal communications. For example, staff at outside facilities could use video podcasts to learn about city information on the TV monitors.

While there are several benefits to podcasting, it is not recommended for corporate use until more information about the risks, potential uses, legal and technical concern and staff resources required to implement podcasting are known.

Recommendation:
28. That the City of Kitchener not pursue the use of podcasting as a means of further examination is conducted into:
- **Potential specific uses;**
- **Legal and technical concerns;**
- **Staff resources required to establish and produce podcasts, and;**
- **The number of citizens and demographic profile of who would use a city podcast.**

Wikis

Designed in 1995, Wikis are open, collaborative websites on specific topics where anyone can contribute content. The best known Wiki is "Wikipedia", which is essentially a free encyclopedia which everyone can collaborate on and edit – an online version of Encyclopedia Britannica, written largely by the general public.

It is not recommended that organizations create their own Wikipedia page – the intent of Wikipedia is to have pages created and edited by third-party members of the general public. Currently, there is a City of Kitchener Wikipedia page that is updated by many members of the general public. While the City of Kitchener is not generally involved in the monitoring or maintenance of the page, Corporate Communications and Marketing staff has submitted edits regarding inaccurate or misleading information from time to time.

Another use for Wikis is emerging. Closed Wikis – whose content can only be seen and edited by specific members of a working group – are becoming increasingly popular within organizations for internal communications uses. Wikis enable groups to collaborate on large-scale projects online. Group members can more easily organize their input and free ideas typically trapped in long chains of email.

Due to the need for Wiki pages to be generated by members of the public, rather than the organization, the corporate use of Wikis for external communications purposes will not be pursued any further. However the city will explore potential opportunities to use Wikis in an internal capacity – to enable staff to collaborate on future project development.

Recommendation
29. That the City of Kitchener not pursue the use of wikis as a method for communicating with the general public any further, but that their use as an internal communications tool be examined for possible incorporation into a redesign of the city's Intranet site.

Online Tools Not Recommended

During the development of the strategy, several social media tools were examined for their potential application to the City of Kitchener's communication and marketing goals and objectives that, for various reasons, will not be pursued any further at this time.

> **Recommendation**
> **30.   That the following social media tools NOT BE PURSUED ANY FURTHER as a primary tool for corporate use by the City of Kitchener:**
> - **Craigslist**
> - **Myspace**
> - **Digg**
> - **Yahoo ads**
> - **Google ads**
> - **YouTube ads**

Craigslist

Begun in 1995 in California, Craigslist is a centralized network of online communities that features free 80 million new classified advertisements – from all over the world – each month. The popularity of the tools has expanded rapidly – the site currently experiences more than 20 billion page views per month – ranking it 30th overall worldwide for website visits. It also remains one of the top job boards in the world with more than one million new job listings each month

Despite its incredible success, corporate use of Craigslist is not recommended because of the site's primarily American demographics and popularity and due to the significant amount of inappropriate sexual content.

- 92.3% of Craigslist traffic is generated within the United States.
- Only 1.7% of traffic to the site comes from Canada.

MySpace

MySpace was created in 2003 as a free social networking platform which, similar to Facebook, allows its members to create unique personal profiles online in order to find and communicate with old and new friends. At the time it was created, Facebook didn't yet exist and MySpace was hailed as revolutionizing t he Internet. Many web experts point to MySpace as the true beginning of social media.

Since its introduction however, Facebook has continued to grow exponentially, overtaking MySpace in users by December of 2008 and reaching 400 million users in 2010, compared to MySpace's 55 million members.

Web experts say that the demise of MySpace is related to its "portal strategy" which sought to amass an audience primarily around arts and entertainment content – as opposed to Facebook's social networking focus.

Digg

Digg is essentially a social news website made for people who discover and share web-based content from anywhere on the web. Users submit links to everything from news to video images to Digg. Once content is submitted, other users can see it and "Digg" what they like best. If a submission receives enough Diggs it is promoted to the front page for millions of visitors to see. Digg also provides advertising opportunities which, research indicates, are expensive.

In 2009, Digg reported 14.7 million users worldwide. Only a small portion – 8.7% – was Canadian. Due to factors including the expense of advertising and a minimal Kitchener-based audience, the Digg platform is not recommended for corporate use.

Yahoo Ads

Yahoo Canada is a leading Internet destination that provides various online products and services to meet the needs of Canadians while also offering a range of tools and marketing solutions to help businesses connect with Internet users.

During the strategy development, Yahoo advertising was examined for its potential as a new advertising tool for the city. While the site is heavily used by Ontarians – many of them likely from Kitchener – the cost of advertising is prohibitive to most Canadian municipalities. Advertisers must commit to spending a minimum of $10,000 per month. For this reason, Yahoo advertising is not recommended for corporate use.

Google Ads

Most people recognize Google as the world's largest Internet search engine however; the company also offers an advertising opportunity called Google AdWords. Using the Google network to advertise has significant advantages since 80% of Internet users worldwide are using it daily.

With an audience larger than any other network or single web property, on the Google network, advertising messages reach more of the target audience, in more places, more often. With the "perfect placement service" the city could control where its ads appear and review the effectiveness on a site-by-site bases to see the number of impressions, clicks and conversion data.

However, similar to Yahoo advertising, the cost of using Google Adwords and the perfect placement service is prohibitive. The program is only open to new advertisers in Canada and the United States with a sustained budget of more than $250 per month. At this time, the City of Kitchener continues to use its advertising dollars to ensure that information appears in a wide range of locations to ensure the broadest reach. Google Adwords is not recommended for corporate use.

Best Practices

Corporate Social Media Policy

The City of Kitchener's Corporate Social Media Policy (Appendix B) is a best practice. It is among the first, if not the first, comprehensive policy to address social media usage by municipal government in Canada. Research into how other Canadian cities are handling their foray into the world of social media indicates a split between:

- Those that are functioning without a policy.
- Those that are currently developing a policy.
- Those that have added statements about social media to existing policies about public statements and/or media relations.

Extensive research into the policies and policy development practices of other Canadian cities and governments, private business, organizations and universities worldwide, helped to inform the development of the City of Kitchener's policy. Additionally, the policy was developed in collaboration with staff advisors from the City of Kitchener's legal and records management divisions.

The Corporate Social Media Policy outlines for employees the corporate standards and principles of communicating in the online world when it relates to discussing, sharing or commenting on city-related business. Additionally, it serves to:

- Protect the city's reputation and ensure consistency and professionalism in how the corporation and its employees communicate about the city's business with our public stakeholders via all online forums and social media/networking sites.
- Provide employees with an understanding of the policies and procedures surrounding the acceptable corporate and personal use of social media sites and/or personal websites as they relate to discussing the business of the City of Kitchener.
- Establish protocols, criteria and courses of action for:
    - o Establishing and monitoring of acceptable social media tools for use by the corporation and its enterprises.
    - o Determining/adopting new social media tools and/or accounts for corporate use.
    - o Appropriate monitoring and administration of corporate social media tools.
    - o Providing timely, effective and accurate information and responses.
    - o Escalation of controversial or sensitive matters relating to online content about the City of Kitchener, its business or its employees.
    - o Ensuring appropriate records management and retention efforts as it relates to online forums and tools.
    - o Ensuring appropriate protection of privacy of the public who engage or interact with the city via social media/networking tools.

Social Media Guidelines for Staff

With the exponential growth of social media, it has become a best practice among organizations worldwide to introduce social media guidelines for staff.

While the City of Kitchener's Corporate Social Media Policy is important and necessary, it is lengthy and technical and as a result, is not easily communicated to, or highly read by, staff. At the same time, it is important that staff be aware of and understand the corporations' expectations in regards to sharing, discussing or commenting on corporate business online.

To address this issue and ensure that staff is aware of the city's expectations of them, the project team developed a simple set of Social Media Guidelines for Staff (Appendix C) – which are based on research into similar guidelines and best practices from companies, governments and universities around the world. They represent a lighter-toned reflection of the most important points of the social media policy and serve as a quick reference guide of expectations and tips for staff to consider.

The guidelines only apply to City of Kitchener employees who, on their own time, create or contribute to blogs, personal websites, wikis, social networks, virtual worlds, or any other kind of social media – or who comment on online media stories relating to city business. Additional general "netiquette" tips are also provided within the document.

Effective Web Writing

The City of Kitchener's website is a primary source of information and services for citizens, staff, business, investors, visitors and other stakeholders. In 2010, the city will launch a brand new, redesigned website with content that has been written in
accordance with best practices for effective web-writing.

As new content managers begin to create page content for the new website it is
imperative that have clear guidelines in place for effective content writing. Effective copywriting for the web will ensure that information about programs, services, projects
and decisions is accurate, up-to-date, visually pleasing, easy to read and easy to find for the reader.

In order to achieve these objectives, a Guidelines for Effective Web Writing (Appendix D) have been developed to ensure the reader remains the copywriter's number one priority when developing text for the web. The new guidelines will be part of the training provided to content managers and will also be included in the corporate social media training sessions to be developed.

Online Recruitment

Online recruitment uses the power of the Internet to match people to jobs. For the most part, online recruiting at the City of Kitchener has been about advertising job vacancies on either general or niche job sites or corporate sites, but there is a growing recognition that specific social media tools can be effective for recruitment, too.

As the recruitment industry continues to evolve into a place where online connections and networking are becoming as important as traditional job ads and paper resumes, employers – including the City of Kitchener – are rethinking the way they search for, identify and recruit new employees.

In today's Internet-driven society, traditional methods of recruitment are not enough. The city recognizes that as the Baby Boom generation heads to retirement, we will enter a talent war. In order to attract the best and brightest talent, it will be important to diversify the recruitment program to include communications about job vacancies on social networking sites to avoid missing out on the highly qualified individuals who use these sites.

Social networking sites, like LinkedIn, give the city the ability to connect with job seekers on a more personal level than ever before. Job seekers are using online mediums more and more to search for work because they are faster and easier to apply to; because they are convenient – they can submit an application at any time of day and/or they don't have to fill it out all at once.

Additionally, online recruiting via the city's website and social media tools provides several benefits, including:
- Increasing the city's reach – providing a cost-effective way to publicize appropriate job openings to the general public in a wide geographical area.
- Speed – ads can be seen 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Providing an effective and efficient online application process.
- Strengthening efforts to reach out to a younger audience who expect to find information online.
- Online advertising is extremely flexible, enabling the city to post ads immediately or amend them easily as required.

Currently, the city continues to gradually increase its online recruitment efforts – using its website, other online job boards and websites and, most recently, introducing an automated tracking system "hire desk" that enables resumes submitted online to be sorted, tracked and ranked for skills more easily.

The research completed during the development of this online strategy has led to recommendations that will see the city begin to expand its online recruiting efforts to include social media tools including: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Kijiji.

After extensive research, several tools have been recommended for use in the city's online recruiting efforts. The recommendation is below. Additionally, more information about each of the specific tools is contained in the "Recommended Online Tools Section."

Recommendation:

In addition to using LinkedIn for online recruiting purposes, the city will also use several other social media tools. It is also recommended:

31. That the City of Kitchener use the following social media tools for online employee recruitment:
    - Facebook Marketplace – to be managed by Human Resources staff.
    - Facebook status updates on corporate fan page – to be managed by Corporate Communications staff.
    - Facebook employment link on corporate fan book page.
    - Twitter status update – to be managed by Corporate Communications staff.
    - LinkedIn job board – managed by Human Resources staff.
    - LinkedIn group page job boards – managed by Human Resources staff.

Keeping Web Content Current

Research and web experts agree that the number one reason why a website fails is because of poorly written and out-of-date content. While a professional looking website, with effective and efficient navigation and eye-catching graphics, are critical for a site to succeed, the information the site provides is what earns credibility and trust – and it is the deciding factor as to whether visitors will return to the site in the future.

In 2010, the City of Kitchener will launch a newly-redesigned website which be managed by a new content management strategy (CMS). The CMS is built on the foundation of a strong and supportive partner-ship between staff across the corporation and staff within the corporate communications and marketing division. In the end, this partnership and the entire CMS will help the city provide better service to our diverse range of customers.

The CMS is a comprehensive plan for staff to follow that will enable the city to better manage its website content (text, photos, video, PDF's, etc). A formal, coordinated CMS will enhance the city's website as a customer-service tool and set out clear expectations, responsibilities and accountability for the management of the website content.

The ultimate goal of the city's CMS it to ensure information on the website is accurate and up to date. Effectively managing the website content will engage stakeholders in two-way communications and encourage them to i nteract with the city through its website.

The new content management process, which includes content writers from across the corporation who work with content publishers within the Corporate Communications and Marketing Division, involves three simple steps:

51.4% of Canadians who go online are searching for information on Canadian municipal, provincial or federal gover nment.

Government information searches are in the top 10 highest recorded activities on the Internet among all Canadians.

25.5% of Canadians who go online at home say they spend time communicating with municipal, provincial or federal governments.

Statistics Canada, 2007

STEP 1
Decentralized Creation
Content Writer drafts or changes webpage text in the city's content management system, i:Create.

STEP 2
Centralized Approval
Using i:Create, the Content Writer submits the new or changed content to the assigned Content Publisher for review, revision, approval and publication. Prior to publication the Content Publisher identifies where on the website the new content will reside. Content Publishers will send content they consider to be highly controversial or sensitive to a Managing Editor for review and approval prior to publication.

STEP 3
Website Publication
Once content is reviewed and approved, the Content Publisher releases the page to go live on the city's website. If publisher makes significant changes to content, he/she will send content back to Content Writer for final review to ensure accuracy.

Search Engine Optimization

When people are looking for information on the web, they often turn to search engines – like Google – where they can enter a search term and be greeted with pages of search results. When it comes to online searches, research shows that 85 % of Internet users find websites through search engines; 90% of Internet users do not go past the top 30 search engine results.

To increase traffic to their websites and become a credible and trusted source for information, organizations like the City of Kitchener want to ensure that their website ranks high in search rankings. The process of making a website "search engine friendly" is called search engine optimization and it incorporates a variety of key techniques which have been used to redevelop the City of Kitchener's website.

When the city launches its newly redesigned website in 2010, the site will be built to maximize search engine optimization through the use of meta data and meta tags. Meta data and tags are a series of words that are built into the HTML code of the website – not visible to users – which match words contained within the web content on each page. These elements provide information to search engines about the page which helps to categorize and, ultimately, rank the page.

Today, effective web content is as important as meta data and tags in search engine ranking. Additional strategies for effective content writing are also being employed in the redesign of the new site.

Online graphic design

There are many benefits to online advertising, including the ability to personalize messages and deliver them to specifically targeted audiences; the affordability of pay per click advertising; the flexibility offered in terms of making quick adjustments or changes and the speed in which they can be placed before an audience.

Still, the importance of online graphic design – how online advertising is designed – is often underestimated. It is important to adhere to the best practices of online graphic design to ensure that the city is creating effective advertising that not only reaches the intended audience, but that engages the audience and causes them to act.

During the development of the Online Communications Strategy, design team staff compiled significant research into online advertising design, including information about colour choices, typography, content, size, ad types and location on the page which will inform the design of future online advertising. Complete best practices for online graphic design are contained in Appendix E.

Privacy and Protection of Personal information

As with all municipalities, the City of Kitchener is governed by a piece of legislation called the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA). The intention of the Act is to promote transparency of government by facilitating access to records by the public.

Additionally, the Act places requirements on municipalities to properly protect the personal information of individuals and as such, the Act places obligations upon the city for the appropriate collection, use and disclosure, security, and disposition of personal information. The City of Kitchener takes its obligation to protect the personal information of citizens very seriously, however, because it is still relatively new, social media presents new issues and challenges to consider in this regard.

While, at this time, it is not clear how the MFIPPA legislation should be interpreted in regards to Canadian municipalities using social media tools, the City of Kitchener has chosen to take a proactive approach to addressing the issues of privacy and the protection of personal information that includes:

- Development and communication of a comprehensive Corporate Social Media Policy (Appendix B) which includes specific direction about inappropriate content, privacy and protection of personal information.
- Development and communications of Social Media Guidelines for Staff (Appendix C)
- Development and implementation of corporate social media training for all staff.
- Development of a disclaimer now included on the city's Facebook page (Appendix F) explaining criteria for inappropriate comments and reminding fans that their personal information is being managed and stored by a third party – and encouraging them to ensure that their privacy settings are set appropriately.
- Creating a single staff online communications specialist position that ensures consistent and timely maintenance and monitoring of online social media tools.

Records Management and Retention

The use of social media by city government presents new challenges for records management and retention. Online conversations and engagement may constitute official records which must be kept according to the city's Records and Retention schedule.

The project team took a proactive approach to ensuring that appropriate records management and retention practices are implemented regarding the use of social media tools through collaborating with records management staff during the strategy's development. Additionally, records management staff was extensively involved in the development of the Corporate Social Media Policy (Appendix B) which includes specific direction on this issue.

Currently, the city monitors, records and stores interactions on its Facebook page monthly in hard copy. Procedures to ensure that records management and retention practices are followed in regards to other social media tools – not yet in use – are currently being developed.

The city's social media moderators will be responsible for ensuring that applicable content is retained for the appropriate period of time under the city's records and retention schedule.

Glossary of Terms

- **Traditional Communications** refers to the sharing of information for any purpose via commonly used traditional tools such as media relations (media releases, advisories, and interviews), print (brochures, posters, newspaper advertisements) or radio.

- **Online Communications** refers to the communications of information through the use of the Internet for any purpose (i.e. information sharing, marketing, engagement). There are several different general categories of online communications, including, but not limited to:

  o **Social Media and Social Networking** focuses on building online communities of people who share interests and/or activities, or who are interested in exploring the interests and activities of others through two-way communication. Popular methods include Facebook and Twitter.

  o **Online Advertising** is a form of promotion that uses the Internet for the expressed purpose of delivering marketing messages to attract customers or sell products. Examples include ads placed on third-party websites or search engines.

  o **E-mail Marketing** is a form of direct marketing that uses email as a means of communicating to an audience.

- **Content** is used to describe text, pictures, video and other meaningful material that is available on the Internet.

- **Content Management System** is a software suite that is used for creating and managing HTML content. The software provides authoring (and other) tools designed to allow users with little knowledge of programming languages to create and manage content with relative ease.

- **Search Engine Optimization** is the process of improving the volume or quality of traffic to a websitefrom search engines (i.e. Google or Yahoo) via natural search results.

- **Meta Data and Meta Tags** are a series of words that are built into the HTML code of the website – not visible to users – which match words contained within the web content on each page. These elements provide information to search engines about the page which helps to categorize and, ultimately, rank the page.

- **Photosharing** means uploading photos to a website like Flickr or Facebook where other people can access them to view, comment on and potential reuse them.

- **A Blog**, short for "weblog", is like an online journal. A blog is a frequently updated, personal website featuring diary-type commentary and links to articles on other Web sites. Blogs range from the personal to the political, and can focus on one narrow subject or a whole range of subjects.

- **Microblogging** has been pioneered by Twitter and is a relatively new addition to the world of social media in which contributors post a stream of very short messages (140 characters or less) providing information about their current thoughts or activity which can then be subscribed to by others.

- **Podcasting** is audio or video content that can be downloaded automatically through a subscription to a website – which can then be viewed or listened to offline.

- **RSS feed** is short for Really Simple Syndication and it allows people to subscribe to content on blogs and other social media sites and networks and have it delivered to you through an RSS feed reader or your web browser.

- **A Wiki** is a web page or set of webpages that can be edited collaboratively. The best known example is Wikipedia, an encyclopedia created by thousands of contributors from around the world. Wikis can be a good way for people to write a document or plan a significant project together since they cut down on email.

- **Hashtags** are a form of passing on information on Twitter. People may use hashtags (for example #kitchener) when talking about a city Twitter post. The tag enables others to click on it and jump immediately to the conversation.

- **Google Analytics** is a free service offered by Google that generates detailed statistics about the visitors to a website. It can track visitors from all referrers, including search engines, display advertising, pay-per-click networks, email marketing and digital collateral such as links within PDF document.

- **Pay-Per-Click** is an Internet advertising model used on websites, in which advertisers pay their host only when their ad is clicked.

- **Page impressions** are counted each time a specific page within a website is viewed.

City of Kitchener, Online Communications Strategy

Summery of Recomendations

Corporate Policy & Staff Guidelines:

1. That the attached Corporate Social Media Policy (Appendix B) and Social Media Guidelines for Staff (Appendix C) be approved and communicated to City of Kitchener staff.

2. That the attached guidelines for effective web-writing (Appendix D) be endorsed for use by all city staff writing online content for the city's websites and social media pages.

Responsibility, Accountability, Resourcing:

3. That the Corporate Communications and Marketing Division serve as a centralized resource for the oversight and use of social media sites by the city and its enterprises, as well as the creation and maintenance of content on those sites.

4. That the Corporate Communications and Marketing Division develop a centralized system available to all city staff to submit information for consideration and potential posting on social media sites.

5. That the Corporate Communications and Marketing Division review and revise its mandate and list of services provided to its customer to reflect the addition of social media and other online communications tools, before the end of 2010.

6. That the standard templates used for all communications and marketing plans be revised to include specific consideration for the use of online communications tools – including measuring their effectiveness – which are deemed appropriate to the specific target audiences, objectives, budget and key messages of each individual plan.

7. That the current position of Communications and Marketing Associate (Public Affairs) be reassigned to a Communications and Marketing Associate (Online Specialist), by reducing the amount of time spent in support of communications planning and public affairs writing, and taking on new responsibilities for specific content management and oversight of the city's online communications tools.

Corporate Training:

8. That the Corporate Communications and Marketing Division develop and deliver a comprehensive social media training program which is available to all city staff and includes, but is not limited to, the following information:
    - An introduction to online communications and social media
    - Purpose, benefits and risks of using online communications
    - Corporate Social Media Policy
    - Social Media Guidelines for city Staff (including netiquette)
    - Effective Web-Writing Guidelines
    - How to access and take advantage of the corporation's social media tools

Ongoing Review of Online Communications:

9. New and existing online social media tools will be evaluated and selected for use in conjunction with other traditional communications methods, by staff of the Corporate Communications and Marketing Division. Tools will be selected in collaboration with clients, in the same way that traditional methods of communications are chosen for projects and initiatives – based on the size, scope, objectives and target audiences of the project.

Recommended Online Tools

10. That a comprehensive communications and marketing plan be developed and implemented, by the end of 2010, to make residents and other stakeholders aware of the city's use of these social media sites and to encourage them to stay informed about the city through those networks.

Facebook

11. That the City of Kitchener provide a single, comprehensive corporate Facebook 'fan page' that is monitored and maintained by staff in the Corporate Communications and Marketing Division on a daily basis, and which is used to inform and educate residents and other stakeholders, as well as engage them in conversation about city business.

12. That the City of Kitchener endorse the use of Facebook Ads for reaching specific target audiences and demographics and to achieve the goals and objectives identified within supporting communications and marketing plans.

Twitter

13. That, on a one year pilot, the City of Kitchener create a single, corporate Twitter feed that is maintained by a single, identifiable individual, the Director of Corporate Communications and Marketing.

14. That a review of the effectiveness of a corporate Twitter feed be conducted one year from its initiation, to determine whether or not to continue the use of this tool, or whether changes are required.

Youtube

15. That the City of Kitchener create a corporate YouTube channel for posting all videos showcasing Kitchener that is managed by Corporate Communications and Marketing staff and that content only publish at the sole discretion of the city.

16. That the City of Kitchener develop and implement a full communications and marketing plan focused on encouraging staff, citizens and other stakeholders to create and submit video material for posting on the city's YouTube channel.

Flickr

17. That the City of Kitchener create a corporate Flickr account as a method of gathering photographs taken by citizens and other stakeholders for use by the city.

18. That, by the end of 2010, the City of Kitchener develops and implements a detailed process to obtain photographs from other Flickr account holders, and a formal procedure for ensuring photo waiver forms are completed and filed and photo credits are provide to those individuals when used by the city.

LinkedIn

19. That the City of Kitchener use LinkedIn's job boards for online recruitment purposes when deemed appropriate for the position being advertised.

Kijiji

20. That Kijiji be used for specific online recruitment purposes when deemed appropriate by the HR Division.

Enewsletter

21. That the Corporate Communications and Marketing Division develop and maintain a single, corporate e-newsletter for citizens and other stakeholders and that the potential for other topic and enterprise specific e-newsletters be examined before the end of 2010.

Email Signatures

22. That the City of Kitchener develop a formal corporate email signature policy that takes into consideration, but not be limited to: font type, size and colour, standard information which must appear and the appropriateness of taglines and quotes used by individual employees.

Ongoing Measuring, Monitoring & Evaluating:

23. That the Corporate Communications and Marketing Division engage its customers in the development of specific measurements for all online communications tools used by the city and that those measurements are focused on measuring the effectiveness and cost/benefit of each tool.

24. That the city's measurements for the effectiveness of online communications be added to the city's annual business planning process and the collection of key performance indicators.

25. That the Online Communications Strategy team conduct a review – annually – of the effectiveness of online tools being used by the city as well as any emerging technologies or social media sites identified for potential future use.

26. That the addition of any online communications tools or social media sites, for use by the city, be approved by the Corporate Management Team prior to their implementation.

Tools Not Recommended For Use By The City:

27. That the City of Kitchener not pursue the use of a corporate blog for communicating with citizens and other stakeholders until such time as further investigation into the corporation's appetite for use of this tool is discussed further with senior management, including identifying the staff resource who might write, maintain and monitor the corporate blog.

28. That the City of Kitchener not pursue the use of podcasting as a means of further examination is conducted into:
    o Potential specific uses;
    o Legal and technical concerns;
    o Staff resources required to establish and produce podcasts, and;
    o The number of citizens and demographic profile of who would use a city podcast.

29. That the City of Kitchener not pursue the use of wikis as a method for communicating with the general public any further, but that their use as an internal communications tool be examined for possible incorporation into a redesign of the city's Intranet site.

30. That the following social media tools not be pursued any further as a primary tool for corporate use by the City of Kitchener:
    • Craigslist
    • Myspace
    • Digg
    • Yahoo ads
    • Google ads
    • YouTube ads

Online Recruitment:

31. That the City of Kitchener use the following social media tools for online employee recruitment:
    - o Facebook Marketplace – to be managed by Human Resources staff.
    - o Facebook status updates on corporate fan page – to be managed by Corporate Communications staff.
    - o Facebook employment link on corporate fan book page.
    - o Twitter status update – to be managed by Corporate Communications staff.
    - o LinkedIn job board – managed by Human Resources staff.
    - o LinkedIn group page job boards – managed by Human Resources staff.

City of Kitchener, Online Communications Strategy
Social Media Policy

Policy Purpose:

This Corporate Social Media Policy outlines for employees the corporate standards and principles of communicating in the online world when it relates to discussing, sharing or commenting on city business. Additionally, it serves to:

- Protect the city's reputation and ensure consistency and professionalism in how the corporation and its employees communicate about the city's business with our public stakeholders via all online forums and social media/networking sites.
- Provide employees with an understanding of the policies and procedures surrounding the acceptable corporate and personal use of social media sites and/or personal websites as they relate to discussing the business of the City of Kitchener.
- To establish protocols, criteria and courses of action for:
  - o Establishing and monitoring of acceptable social media tools for use by the corporation and its enterprises.
  - o Determining/adopting new social media tools/accounts for corporate use.
  - o Appropriate monitoring and administration of corporate social media tools.
  - o Providing timely, effective and accurate information and responses.
  - o Ensuring a mechanism to address controversial or sensitive matters relating to online content about the City of Kitchener, its business or its employees.
  - o Ensuring appropriate records management and retention efforts as it relates to online forums and tools.
  - o Ensuring appropriate protection of privacy of the public who engage or interact with the city via social media/networking tools.

Policy Scope:

This policy applies to all City of Kitchener staff, particularly those who make public statements (see Definitions) on corporate or personal social media sites, social media networks and/or personal websites that discuss, share or comment on city business.

Definitions:

Online Communications refers to the communications of information through the use of the internet for any purpose (i.e. information sharing, marketing, engagement). There are several different general categories of online communications, including, but not limited to:

- **Social Networking and Social Media** focus on building online communities of people who share interests and/or activities, or who are interested in exploring the interests and activities of other through two-way communication. Popular methods of social media/networking include: Facebook and Twitter.

- **Online Advertising** is a form of promotion that uses the Internet for the expressed purpose of delivering marketing messages to attract customers or sell products. Examples include ads placed on third-party websites or search engines and rich media ads.

- **E-mail Marketing** is a form of direct marketing which uses email as a means of communicating to an audience.

Traditional Communications refers to the sharing of information for any purpose via commonly used or traditional tools such as media relations (releases, advisories, interviews), print (brochures, posters, paper advertisements) or radio.

Social Media Content Moderators are employees within the corporation who have been appointed to speak on behalf of the city through updating the content of the city's social media sites and pages.

A Public Statement is a declaration made by City of Kitchener employees in any public forum, which relates to the City of Kitchener, its employees and/or its business and enterprise units and includes statements made in blogs, online forums or discussions, social networking sites wikis and elsewhere in the public record.

Intellectual Property describes ownership of an intellectual 'product' which may have commercial value. It encompasses areas including: copyright, trademarks, patents and design.

An Official Record is anything which is created in the regular course of conducting city business and which documents the business of the city regardless of format. Official records document decisions, policies, procedures, transactions, activities, commitments, obligations, ownership, entitlement, legal rights, etc. of the city and are relied upon by the city for proof of such or to support city business.

A Transitory Record is a record of the city, regardless of format, that is a copy of an official record or is used for the purpose of creating official records. These records are temporary in nature and are not the final copy upon which the city would rely for proof of any activity, decision, policy, etc. unless an official record did not exist.

Personal Information is information about an identifiable person recorded in any format including race; national or ethnic origin; colour; religion; age; marital status; education; medical, criminal or employment history; financial transactions; identifying number or symbol; address; fingerprints; blood type; personal email address; and name where it appears with other personal information; picture; etc.

Disclosable refers to information, including electronic information, which is eligible for access by the
public in response to a request for information under the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

Discovery refers to a legal process in which the City of Kitchener could be compelled to disclose documents in connection with a court matter. The process is generally used by one party to obtain facts and information about the case from the other party in order to assist with preparation for trial.

General Policy Statement:

According to its mandate, the Corporate Communications and Marketing Division have a responsibility to promote the openness, transparency and accountability of the work and business of the city through:

(1) sharing information;
(2) educating the public, and;
(3) promoting enterprises, programs and services.

To ensure that information about the city's decisions, programs, services and initiatives reaches as many people as possible, the division takes a balanced approach – using both traditional communication methods (see Definitions) as well as various online communication methods (see Definitions.)

While the use of online and social media sites and/or networks (see Definitions) creates new opportunities for enhanced communication and collaboration with residents and other city stakeholders, it also creates new responsibilities for City of Kitchener employees.

The division, and the corporation as a whole, recognizes that social media networks are powerful communications tools that can have a significant impact on organizational, personal and professional reputations. Because they blur the lines between personal voice and corporate voice, the following policy has been developed to establish standards and expectations for employees when using social media to discuss, share or comment on the business of the City of Kitchener.

Please note: For the purpose of this policy "social media sites" and/or "social media networks" refers to those sites/networks whose content is open to the general public.

Policy Statement:

Site Selection/Establishing New Accounts

- The Corporate Communications and Marketing Division will serve as a centralized resource for the oversight and use of social media tools and sites by the city and its enterprises, as well as for the creation and maintenance of content on those sites.

- The city will maintain a series of corporate accounts on various social media tools. Final approva for the corporate use of new social media tools and/or new accounts on social media sites already in use by the corporation will be the responsibility of the Director of Corporate Communications and Marketing.

- Criteria for adopting new social media tools – or establishing new accounts within social media sites already in use by the corporation – will include, but not be limited to comprehensive research that:

  o Demonstrates the need for the specific tool/why it is required
  o Demonstrates the added benefits of using the tool
  o Demonstrates a content approval process to ensure that posted content is consistent with corporate messaging and standards.
  o Demonstrates that the use of the new tool will not interfere with the credibility of the City of Kitchener's other established social media sites/networks.
  o Addresses any legal concerns; and
  o Identifies appropriate staff resources that would be required to establish and maintain the new account according to the best practices identified in the city's Online Communications Strategy.

Site Administration

- The use of all social networking sites by the City of Kitchener will adhere to:

  o Applicable provincial and federal laws, regulations and policies;
  o The Terms of Service of each social networking site; and
  o All Administrative, Human Resources and Records Management policies and other applicable city policies and guidelines.

- All new and existing social media tools being used to conduct City of Kitchener business will be established and administered by an appointed social media content moderator from the Corporate Communications and Marketing Division. OR, if appropriate, a City of Kitchener content moderator, from another division, appointed by the Director of Corporate Communications and Marketing, who is responsible for creating and posting, approved content and monitoring public response.

- All city social networking moderators will be trained regarding the terms of the City of Kitchener Corporate Social Media Policy and Social Media Guidelines, including their responsibilities in regards to records management and retention, privacy and reviewing content submitted for posting to ensure compliance with the policy, and the city's web writing guidelines and online netiquette guidelines.

Site Content

- Pre-approved content for consideration and potential inclusion on corporate social media sites will be provided to the Social Media Content Moderator via email to: socialmediapostings@kitchener.ca – by staff from across the corporation.

- Updates to social media sites, pages, accounts and channels being used for corporate business will be created and posted by a social networking moderator in accordance with the best practices for timing and content identified within the City of Kitchener's Online Communications Strategy

- Where possible, all social networking sites will clearly indicate that they are maintained by the City of Kitchener and will have the City of Kitchener logo and contact information displayed.

- Where possible, social networking sites will link back to the official City of Kitchener Internet site for forms, documents and other information.

- City of Kitchener social networking sites will include an introductory statement that clearly specifies what content is unacceptable and will be subject to removal without notification.

- City of Kitchener social networking pages and their content will adhere to the policies and guidelines of each individual social networking site.

- City of Kitchener social networking content and comments containing any of the following forms of content shall not be allowed for posting:

  o Comments not topically related to the particular site or blog article being commented upon;
  o Profane language or content;
  o Personal attacks on individuals or specific groups.
  o Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation;
  o Sexual content or links to sexual content;
  o Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;
  o Content related to non-city related sales, advertising or promotions;
  o Content for the purposes of promoting a candidate for municipal, provincial or federal election;
  o Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems;
  o Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party; or
  o Content that is believed to be inappropriate in the opinion of the City of Kitchener's Director of Communications and Marketing.

Protocols

- The social network content moderator will review the city's social networking sites a minimum of two times daily to ensure that is not in compliance with the policy guidelines for appropriate content is immediately brought to the attention of the Director of Corporate Communications and Marketing and/or the Manager of Corporate Communications.

- Content that is flagged by the social media content moderator for potential removal will be reviewed by the Director of Communications and/or the Manager of Corporate Communications to determine the appropriate course of action.

- Content or status updates that generate negative feedback from the public or feedback that is sensitive or controversial in nature will be reviewed by the Director of Corporate Communications and/or the Manager of Corporate Communications to determine the appropriate course of action.

- Content or status updates that request feedback from the general public will be reviewed and approved by the Director of Communications and/or the Manager of Corporate Communications before they are posted.

Employee Expectations and Personal Responsibility

Staff should consider the following when discussing, sharing or commenting on city business when post-ing as official corporate social media content moderators or when discussing, sharing or commenting on city business on personal social media sites, networks and/or personal websites:

- Use of an employee's city e-mail address, communicating in an official capacity, or discussing city business – on personal or corporate social media sites and/or personal websites – will constitute conducting city business.

- Employees representing the city as social media content moderators – and those who choose to discuss city business within their posts to personal social networking sites and/or personal websites – must conduct themselves at all times as a representative of the city and in accordance with this policy and all human resource and administrative policies including, but not limited to:

  o II-60 – Confidentiality of Information
  o II-140 – Freedom from Harassment
  o II-185 – Internet Usage
  o II-235 – Public Criticism
  o II-315 – Violence in the Workplace

- Any City of Kitchener employee engaged in online, electronic dialogue that involves information about City of Kitchener business – including dialogue or information posted to personal social networking sites and/or personal websites – is also required to meet a standard that mandates:

  o Transparency of Origin. The city requires that employees disclose their employment or association with the City of Kitchener in all communications with citizens, customers, the media or other city stakeholders when speaking on behalf of the Corporation of the City of Kitchener.

o Accurate Information. Communications on the corporation's behalf, on all social networking sites, should be based on current, accurate, complete and relevant data. The City of Kitchener will take all reasonable steps to assure the validity of information communicated via any channel but it is the employee's responsibility to assure accuracy in the first instance. Anecdotes and opinions will be identified as such.

o Ethical Conduct. City of Kitchener will not conduct activities that are illegal or contrary to the City of Kitchener's corporate policies.

o Protection of Confidential and Proprietary Information. City of Kitchener employees must maintain the confidentiality of information considered confidential, including company financial and business information, citizen and/or customer personal information, personal information about city council, partner and/or supplier information, personal employee data, or any information not generally available to the public

• To protect personal information, the city's social media moderators will not cite vendors, suppliers, clients, citizens, co-workers or other stakeholders in posts, blogs or comments without their previous approval.

• City-staff-to-city-staff communication for the purpose of conducting official city-related business should not take place using any social media tool – unless the tool is being used only for internal corporate use and its content is closed to the general public. •   Recognizing the benefit of monitoring online stakeholder input into city issues – and the potential need for the city to respond to and/or correct information – city staff can access social media sites including: Facebook pages, Twitter feeds, YouTube, blogs and discussion forms – during work hours provided that they are related to or contain posts or discussions related to city business.

• Corporate responses to online postings, blogs and discussion forums about city-related business will be co-ordinated through the Corporate Communications and Marketing Division.

• City staff should not be posting information to their own personal social media pages – including but not limited to: Facebook, Twitter, websites or blogs – during work time unless they do so during their break or lunch hour.

• Staff will not use City of Kitchener logos, the city crest or enterprise logos for endorsements – or any other corporate/city images or iconography on personal social media sites and/or personal web sites or to promote a product, cause, or political party or candidate.

• City of Kitchener employees who fail to comply with this policy will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination of employment. In addition, depending on the nature of the policy violation or the online channel/page content, participants may also be subject to civil and/or criminal penalties.

Records Management and Retention

- Posts/user content which are considered to be official records (see Definitions) of the city:

    o Must be accessible and readable during their entire retention period.
    o Must only be deleted/purged in accordance with the city's Records Retention Schedule.
    o Must meet the requirements for deletion/purging under The Municipal Act regarding destruction as well as Section 5 of R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 823 and R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 459 under MFIPPA.

- Deleted posts/user content which contains the personal information (see Definitions) of people must be retained for a minimum of one (1) year from the date of the post if no other retention period applies to the post.

- Posts/user content which is considered to be transitory records (see Definitions) of the city may be deleted/purged from the website as soon as they are no longer needed.

- Even after being deleted/purged, copies of posts/user content may remain viewable in cached and archived pages or if other users have copied and stored their user content and therefore, may be disclosable (see Definitions) under applicable privacy legislation and under the rules of discovery (see Definitions) for litigation.

- The city's social media moderators will be responsible for ensuring that applicable content is retained for the appropriate period of time under the city's records and retention schedule.

Privacy Policy

- •Posts/user content containing personal information must be in compliance with:

    o The requirements for the collection of personal information as prescribed under Sections 28, 29 (1) and 29 (2) of MFIPPA.

    o The requirements for use and disclosure of personal information under Sections 31 and 32 of MFIPPA.

    o The requirements for securing personal information as outlined in Section 3 of R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 823 under MFIPPA.

- Whenever possible, notification of the following must be visible and precede any data collection fields for personal information:

    o Online communities aren't private so even posts/user content to a limited access (password protected) community may be accessed by a wider audience than originally intended or by someone not expected to have access to the community.

    o Personal information, which includes IP address, is being collected, managed, processed and/or stored by a 3rd party service provider and is therefore, not in the sole domain, custody and control of the City of Kitchener.

    o Personal information may cross the border to a foreign jurisdiction and will therefore, be subject to the governing laws of that jurisdiction.

o   All social network sites and entries shall clearly indicate that any articles and any other content posted or submitted for posting are subject to public disclosure.

Copyright, Branding, Logos

- The use of the City of Kitchener's name, logo, official marks and other forms of intellectual property owned by the city, without permission, is prohibited as stated in the Corporate Branding Manual.

- Use of the corporate logo must adhere to the standards set out in the Corporate Branding Manual.

- Intellectual property (see Definitions) issues (e.g., copyright, brand names, logos, etc.) exist and must be respected. Proper permission to use others' intellectual property must be obtained prior to using.

See

In addition to the specific statements contained within this policy, city staff also needs to ensure that, in using social media that they are familiar with – and their conduct is in keeping with – existing corporate policies, including:

II-60 – Confidentiality of Information
- Addresses the management of confidential information by city staff – including personal information, sensitive corporate information and third party business information.

II-140 – Freedom from Harassment
- Addresses employees', clients', customers', rights to freedom from harassment in the City of Kitchener work environment.

II-185 – Internet Usage
- Addresses employees' and elected officials' appropriate usage of Internet in the work environment.

II-235 – Public Criticism
- Addresses expectations of employees in regards to expressing restraint in regards to opinions about the city, elected officials, city management, other city employees, the business or decisions of the corporation.

II-315 – Violence in the Workplace
- Addresses violence, threats and other forms of disruptive behaviours in the workplace – which can include oral or written statements, gestures or expressions.

Appendix C

City of Kitchener, Online Communications Strategy
Social Media Guidelines for Staff

If you participate in social media – through contributing to blogs or other online forums, personal web-sites, wikis, or social networks – and you want to discuss, share or comment on city business, please keep the following guidelines and helpful tips in mind:

The Guidelines:

- Know our policies. The City of Kitchener has a Corporate Social Media Policy and a Public Criticism Policy which must be followed. It's important that you know what they say and how they apply to your participation on social media sites or networks – when discussing city business.

- Be transparent. Identify yourself by name and, when relevant, your role at the City of Kitchener — when you discuss, share or comment on City of Kitchener business. Make it clear that you're speaking for yourself and not on behalf of the City of Kitchener. (You might consider a disclaimer such as: "The postings on this site are my own and don't necessarily reflect the City of Kitchener' positions, strategies or opinions.")

- Be accurate. Even though your blog/website/social media posts may be primarily made up of personal opinion, do your research well and check that your facts are accurate and consistent with other information released publicly via other corporate channels.

- Be discreet. Don't provide confidential information that relates to corporate business, city council, employees, citizens, clients or partners. Don't provide personal information or cite or reference people without their consent.

- Be aware of copyrights. Just because it's on the Internet doesn't mean it's free to use. Respect copyright, trade marks, fair use and financial disclosure laws.

- Don't use our logo. Refrain from using the city's official logo, crest, enterprise logos – or any other city-created images or iconography on your sites or pages.

- Don't become an official city spokesperson – unofficially. In other words, don't go ahead and start a new social media account or page for a city project, event or division without consulting the Communications and Marketing Division first.

- Do us all proud. Be protective of the city's interests – and your own – and ensure that all content associated with you is consistent with your work and with the city's values and professional standards.

- Don't forget your day job. Remember that blogging and posting to other social networking sites or your own personal website are personal activities and should be done on your own time.

Other helpful tips to consider:

Here are some other "netiquette" tips that are a good idea to consider when you are using online forums – whether you're discussing city business or not.

- Think twice before posting: Privacy doesn't exist in the world of social media. Remember that what you publish will reflect on the city's reputation – and yours – and it will be public for a long time.

Respect your audience. Remember that anyone, including your colleagues, may be reading what you publish online. In choosing your words and your content, it's a good practice to imagine that your supervisor and your family are reading everything you post.

- Be clear. Ensure your commentary is expressed in such a way that it can't be misrepresented or misunderstood.

- Be respectful of others. Never use ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, or engage in any conduct that would be unacceptable at the workplace. Don't pick fights, be the first to correct your own mistakes, and don't alter previous posts without indicating that you have done so.

- Answer carefully. Understand that content contributed to a social media site could encourage comments or discussion of opposing ideas. Consider your response carefully and think about how it will reflect on you and/or the corporation.

Online Netiquette:

'Netiquette' is a short-form for Internet etiquette. The term represents the informal code – or appropriate behaviour – that people adopt when interacting with others online or through email.

General Netiquette

Before communicating online, consider these general Netiquette guidelines:

- Consider whether email or online communication is the best way to communicate. Sometimes it's better to pick up the phone or speak to someone in person.

- Remember that when communicating by email, you can't convey tone to help get your message across and that can lead to confusion or misinterpretation of your message.

- Think first—messages can be forwarded or copied. Do not send information that you wouldn't want forwarded to a large audience.

- Do not evangelize. It is better to offer a humble opinion and write with reason and diplomacy than to preach it.

- Use the 24-hour rule. Hold off on responding to or sending messages that could provoke an emotional response. Emotional responses sent in haste or anger can be kept indefinitely, recalled, printed and forwarded.

Email Netiquette

Consider the following Netiquette tips before sending an email:

Content:

- Write an accurate subject line so people will know the content of your email.
- Keep in mind that brief, well written messages have a greater impact – emails should be no more than 25 lines.
- Signatures should be kept to 4-6 lines; 70 characters total.
- Spelling and grammar are important:

    o Write, edit and proofread email as you would any other business communication.
    o Don't use 'chat line' lingo.
    o Do not write in all upper case or lower case.
       (UPPER CASE = SHOUTING; lower case is more difficult to read).

- Avoid emoticons. Context and words are a much better way to relay feelings.

Sending email:

- Send messages to only those who would want to read them (i.e., be selective when using "cc").
- Only mark messages urgent or of high importance if they require a response within two hours.
- Do not hit reply all if you were "bcc'd".
- Do not send to a distribution list in the "To" box. Instead, use the "bcc" field.
- If you are forwarding an email: always add a short comment about why you are forwarding it. (Example: FYI).
- Do not edit the text in a forwarded email.
- Do not use read receipts for business email except under specific circumstances, including:

    o If you are sending out official documentation.
    o If your email is urgent and you need to know when it was opened
    o If you are documenting for disciplinary or work performance issues.

- All Departments emails must be approved by your General Manager prior to being sent.

See also:

City of Kitchener Customer Service Guide and Standards

Appendix D

City of Kitchener, Online Communications Strategy
Effective Web-Writing Guidelines

Why do we need web-writing guidelines?

It's all about customer service!

The City of Kitchener's website is a primary source of information and services for citizens, staff, businesses, investors, visitors and other stakeholders. It is essential that the city's website provide stakeholders with information and services that are accurate, up-to-date, visually pleasing, easy-to-read, and easy-to-find.

In order to achieve these objectives, a series of web-writing guidelines has been developed to ensure the reader remains the copywriter's number one priority when developing text for the web.

Following these guidelines is critical to reaching readers in the most effective way possible by meeting their needs and viewing habits when it comes to searching and reading information online.

If readers don't find the information they're looking for on the city's website or if the information is written in a manner that does not meet their needs, they will leave the city's website and search elsewhere.

Our web-writing guidelines have been developed through extensive research into the best practices in writing for a website.

Guidelines

1. **Know Your Audience**
2. **Be Relevant and Objective**
3. **KISS - Keep It Simple and Succinct**

1. Know Your Audience

On the average web page, users have time to read at most 28 per cent of the words during an average visit; 20 per cent is more likely. Skimming and scanning text is common behaviour for most visitors. A typical reader will spend about 2.5 seconds on your web page and then move on if there is no "hook" to hold his/her attention.

1. **Before writing a word of web content,** ask yourself the following questions:

   - Who is my target audience?
   - What information are they looking for?
   - Are they likely to read everything I've written?
   - Is all of the content on the page useful and/or of interest to them?
   - How is this information going to help the reader?

Tip: As a check, read the document as if you were the intended audience and consider what may be lacking -- or what may be unnecessary to include.

2. **Consider literacy levels** -- In order to reach lower-literacy users - and create greater ease for all users - target the lowest literacy level, which is a Grade 3 to 5 reading level and use plain language. Ask yourself these questions:

   - What does the reader need to know about the topic?
   - What will be the most useful information for the reader?

3. **Word usage** -- If a shorter word works, use it. Keep language as simple as possible to convey the message clearly to your reader.
   - i.e. "use" instead of "utilize".

4. **Active voic**e -- Active voice is easy for readers to understand, so it should be used primarily when writing web content.

   - Active: The man must have eaten five hamburgers.
   - Passive: Five hamburgers must have been eaten by the man.

5. **Direct language** -- Use specific, concrete terms to enhance clarity; avoid using obscure words or phrases unfamiliar to the target audience. Simple sentence structure featuring short phrases and direct conclusions is ideal. Sentence fragments are also permissible.

   - The program is free.
   - Healthy neighbourhoods mean healthy communities.
   - Applications are due Feb. 20.

6   **Tone** -- Write in a conversational, friendly tone and in the first-person (i.e. you, we, us, etc.) where possible, as opposed to one that's authoritative or educational. Readers would rather see the word "you" over "one" when you're directing text to them.

2. Be Relevant and Objective

1. **From the top** -- Introductory text on web pages is usually too long, so users skip it. Cut fluffy introductory paragraphs as they waste words that readers will either skip altogether or judge the rest of the page based upon, leading them to stop reading it.

   Start a page with your most useful and important point -- your top key message; continue with the next most important points in the ensuing paragraphs. This is often referred to as the inverted-pyramid style of writing. Short intro's can increase usability by explaining the remaining content's purpose.

   Chunks of information should be 100 words or less, requiring little or no scrolling.

2. **Feature actionable content/hyperlinks** -- The reader's eyes go directly to more actionable content, such as bulleted lists or hyperlinks -- content the reader can select from and follow through to a solution or answer. Make sure to include both, where possible, in your content. And make the action easy!

   Use bulleted lists to break up text. Within a bulleted list, make sure that the grammatical structure is parallel. For example, if the first bullet starts with a noun, the rest of the bullets in the list should be treated the same.

   Use hyperlinks within pages to link to other pages featuring additional, but not quite as relevant or necessary, information on the topic. This way, readers can choose to follow the links later, without disrupting their flow. Ensure that it is clear what all hyperlinks refer to; use "blurbs" to describe what visitors will find when they click on a link.

   - **Optimal use: "Visit the Bay of Fundy website for more information."**
   - **Ineffective use: "For more information on the Bay of Fundy, Click here.**
   - **Ineffective use: "For more information on the Bay of Fundy, visit: www.bayoffundy.com**

3. Avoid blatant sales pitches. People want to know what is in it for them – they already know what is in it for you. Engaging copy is not about telling and selling, it is about helping the reader feel a connection to you and your service/message.

4. Keep your messages flowing by using connector words and phrases.

   - Use words like…But, However, So, Because, What's more, in addition, etc.

3. KISS – Keep it Simple and Succinct

1. **Keep posts short** -- While readers are presumably interested in a topic in order to begin reading about it, this interest wanes more quickly when reading online than when reading print. The content should be clear, direct, brief and to the point (quality of information over quantity)

2. **Write brief, meaningful headlines** -- If the headline fails to get the visitor's attention, he or she won't bother to read the remaining copy. Ensure the headline, summary and lead clearly indicate the scope of the piece, when taken out of context and standing alone.

3. **Communicate information quickly** -- The most important information should be at the top of the page. Given that web users are scanners, focus on the and how:

   • What: Tell residents what your service/project means for them -- the benefit --problems you solve, processes you improve, challenges you meet, and what you add to their quality of life.

   • How: Briefly describe how organization conducts the service. The idea is to create an image/movie in the user's mind to picture the service at work for them. This lends credibility to your claims by drawing a sketch your service into a user's imagination.

4. **Length of text** -- To keep text tightly focused, write long and cut short! Keeping content to around 500 words is optimum. If adapting text from a print source, consider the 50 per cent rule: cut text by half. If the writing still makes sense when cut in half, then leave it short. Add more if you need it.

   • Tip: If adapting from print, use a highlighter pen on hard copy to highlight the most important information. This forms the basis for your web content.

5. **Offer small bits at a time** -- Focus each section/chunk of content on a single topic, so that readers may easily isolate the information they are looking for. Large blocks of text are difficult to read online; information must be broken up to be easily digestible.

6. **Sub-heads** -- Put sub headlines throughout the web copy to break up text into smaller pieces of text. This makes the copy visually appealing and gives the perception that it is easier to read. It is effective in maintaining the attention of readers who scan text and don't read each and every word.

7. **Sentence length** -- Avoid overly long sentences -- keep within a 20-word average. Vary the sentence length for interest. Also, use short paragraphs and bullets when possible.

   • Tip: Short sentences -- from three to five words -- are very effective (but use them only for emphasis).

8. **Keywords** -- Research keywords that relate to the information you're attempting to convey. Anticipate keyword searches that potential customers may perform to find your information. Highlight keywords in your copy in bold -- facts and figures that would interest your readers.

The headline on a page should include at least one keyword that highlights the focus of the piece. Using keywords early on in headlines also means content is more likely to be picked up by search engines (SEO: search engine optimization) and will appear higher on their lists.

Quick Writing Tips

1. Write concisely. If the print version of a brochure is 500 words in length, try to condense the web version to 250 words. Chunks of text should be 100 words or less and sentences should be kept to fewer than 20 words.

2. Break up paragraphs. A solid block of text is very hard to read on screen, so keep paragraphs to three or four sentences each with space between them.

3. Use a lot of headings and sub-heads. These help readers find what they're looking for.

4. Use "blurbs" to describe what visitors will find when they click on a link. For example, Lodging in Whistler -- From 5-star hotels to inexpensive hostels.

5. Make action easy; include bulleted lists and hyperlinks.

   - Subscribe
   - Email us!
   - Register

Appendix E

City of Kitchener, Online Communications Strategy
Best Practices in Online Graphic Design

Best Practices in Online Graphic Design

Topics that will be covered include the anatomy of an ad: colour, typography, copy, size, type and location; keeping your brand consistent online and offline as well as additional online design tips and a look at an important issue, banner blindness.

Anatomy of an Advertisement

The layout of an advertisement, whether for print or online use, typically consists of five characteristics: colour, typography, copy, size, type and location. These should be the areas of focus when transferring a printed advertisement to an online application.

Colour

Colour is an area where print and online differs, though not as much as it did in the past with today's browsers providing a more reliable medium. Designers are no longer restricted to the 256 colours in the web-safe pallet with less than three per cent of people using older browsers.

The technical differences between print and online colour lies in how the colour will be viewed in the end result. Print uses inks - CMYK or Pantone providing consistent results in a printed piece. Online uses RGB colour which could provide inconsistent results depending on where or how it will be viewed. RGB colours tend to appear differently viewed on a CRT monitor compared to an LCD, hand-held device or projection system. Greens can turn black, reds to browns and yellows muddy.

When choosing or changing colour for your design, be sure to make choices that are simple and take into consideration that they may not appear the same on other devices as they do on your own.

Below is a selection of tips to assist you in your colour choices:

- Use colours that will be similar to those on the landing page
- Contrasting colours attract attention – good to use in call to action and/or headings. Works well in ads that are on a dark background that are adjacent to content
- Choose colours that blend into the background/content of the page they're being placed on. Users are more likely to click on ads that look like supplementary information to the information they're reading. Works well with ads that are placed within the content of the webpage on a light coloured background

- Consider changing colours on occasion when placing ads on sites that are frequently visited by your audience to avoid "ad blindness"
- Avoid using blue or purple to highlight words (Historically these colours were used to indicate a link or visited link which may be confusing to users)

Typography

Traditional typography (the process of setting and arranging type) applications are the same whether designing an advertisement for online or print usage. The goal of typography is to "create a readable, coherent, and visually satisfying whole that works invisibly, with a minimum of distractions and anomalies, is aimed at producing clarity and transparency."

Some things to consider when choosing typefaces:

- As with colour choices, choose the same or similar typefaces in your ad that you will be using on your landing page
- Choose typefaces that reflect the message of the ad or brand
- Use a maximum or two or three typefaces in your ad
- A combination of serif and sans serif fonts work well, use one for headlines, one for body copy and provide a balanced contrast between both
- Avoid overusing text treatments such as bold and italic
- Only use underline in links

Another issue to consider is choosing typefaces that are easily readable for those who are older or have visual impairments. The following typeface suggestions contain visual properties that are easily viewed. These properties include:

- Consistent stroke widths
- Open counter forms
- Pronounced ascenders and descenders
- Wider horizontal proportions
- More distinct forms for each character (such as tails on the lowercase letters "t" & "j")
- Extended horizontal strokes for certain letterforms (such as the arm of the lowercase letter "r" or the crossbar of the lowercase letter "t")

Typeface suggestions which include the properties above include:

- Frutiger Bold
- Helvetica Bold
- Univers 55
- Glypha Roman
- Futura Heavy
- Garamond Semibold
- Century Schoolbook
- Bodoni Book
- Times Roman

Copy

It is important to grab readers' attention with a strong headline. Recommended headline styles include:

- How to ("How to Increase Your Sales Up to 500% by Using This One Simple Strategy")
- Question ("Are You Sick and Tired of Working for Someone Else?")
- Command ("Double Your Income within the Next 12 months -- Guaranteed!")
- News ("Announcing a Brand New Breakthrough in E-Publishing")
- Testimonial ("Internet Marketing Exclusive is Pure Genius -- Our Sales Have Increased by 40 %!").

When moving on to body copy, try this approach when developing your copy:

A -Attention -Grab your targets attention
I -Interest -Create curiosity
D -Detail -Provide details
A -Action -Call for action

Facebook suggests keeping advertisements simple and easy to read. They recommend not trying to fit every detail or service into the ad, instead, make it clear what your product or service is, explain to the user exactly what you want them to do when arriving on your landing page and saving all the rest of your details for your landing page.

Size

According to Keith Hagen, an Internet strategist at Marketing Matador, the best sizes of ads, listed in order of effectiveness are:

1. **336x280 (large rectangle)**
2. **300x250 (medium rectangle)**
3. **160x600 (wide skyscraper)**
4. **468x60 (full banner)**
5. **125x125 (square button)**
6. **728x90 (leaderboard)**

Ad Type

There are many types of ads available in the online world which can be effective. They include:

- **Floating ad: An ad which moves across the user's screen or floats above the content.**
- **Expanding ad: An ad which changes size and which may alter the contents of the webpage.**
- **Polite ad: A method by which a large ad will be downloaded in smaller pieces to minimize the disruption of the content being viewed**
- **Wallpaper ad: An ad which changes the background of the page being viewed.**
- **Trick banner: A banner ad that looks like a dialog box with buttons. It simulates an error message or an alert.**
- **Pop-up: A new window that opens in front of the current one, displaying an advertisement, or entire webpage.**

- **Pop-under:** Similar to a Pop-Up except that the window is loaded or sent behind the current window so that the user does not see it until they close one or more active windows.
- **Video ad:** similar to a banner ad, except that instead of a static or animated image, actual moving video clips are displayed. This is the kind of advertising most prominent in television, and many advertisers will use the same clips for both television and online advertising.
- **Map ad:** text or graphics linked from, and appearing in or over, a location on an electronic map such as on Google Maps.
- **Mobile ad:** an SMS text or multi-media message sent to a cell phone.
- **Interstitials:** a nearly full-page ad that loads between the pages you clicked and the one you want to see

Location

Certain locations on a web page tend to be more successful than others. This "heat map" illustrates the ideal placing on a sample page layout. The colors fade from dark orange (strongest performance) to light yellow (weakest performance). All other things being equal, ads located above the fold tend to perform better than those below the fold. Ads placed near rich content and navigational aids usually do well because users are focused on those areas of a page.

Below is a heat chart developed by Google that illustrates the best placement for ads on a
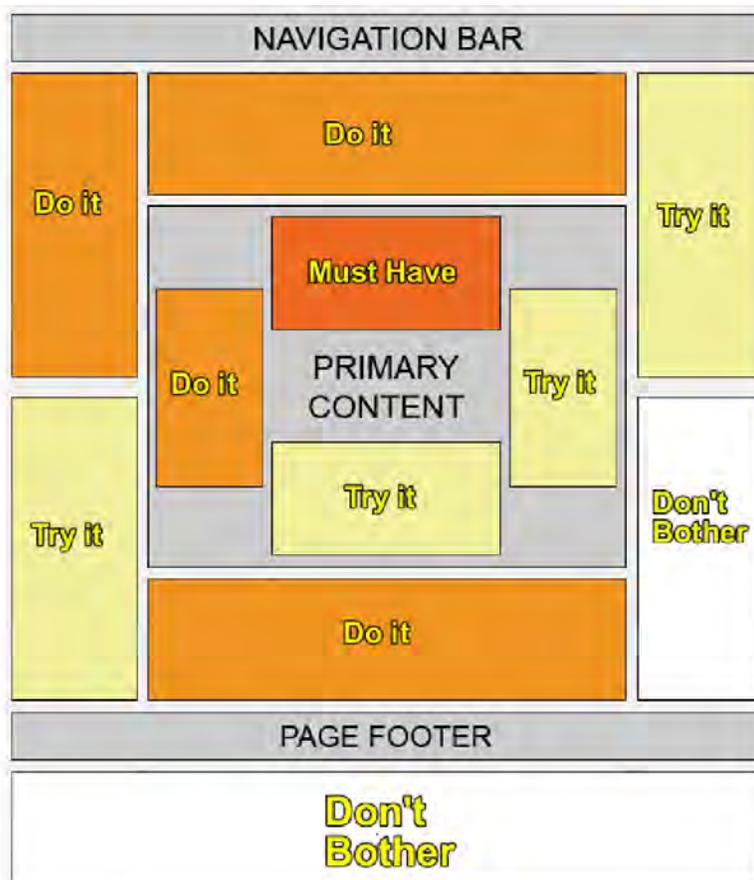
Brand

A brand is an overall identity that incorporates the attributes, quality, experience and connotations associated with a product or service. Each of these things, together with the design of the logo and the choice of copy, need to be carefully considered both individually and collectively. Whether you're choosing to place your ad on a website or in a newspaper, you must consider your brand so that you're sending out the same message in all mediums and building credibility for your product or service through consistency.

Be sure to have your landing page look similar to the overall look of your ad.

Brand

- Many banner and skyscrapers ads follow a "thirds" formula. Two-thirds of the ad contains a picture and the main advertising points; the remaining third is devoted to minimal copy and clickable buttons.

- White space, or negative space, has to do with what is not there. You can make elements stand out by adding white space around them. Without white space, you can't read the text. Photos lose their impact, and the ad loses balance. White space may be the most important component of your advertising design.

- Consider removing borders around your ads as part of helping them blend in better.

- Generally speaking, ads toward the center of the page, above the fold, and blend in with the page tend to perform the best right now.

- Test your designs in every browser and operating system combination

- Don't forget about resolution. If your readers and customers are viewing the webpage on a smaller screen than you design on, your ad can appear much different than you expected

- Stay away from red.

- Change out banners often to stop people from getting used to them.

- Use a clear, strong call to action on all your online ads. Have a clear tagline using as few words that will get your message across. The goal is to give the viewer enough information as possible to get them to click through to your website

Banner Blindness

According to research, while browsing, users almost never look an anything that looks like an advertisement. Many eyetracking studies confirm that theory. Below are three samples of heatmaps from eyetracking studies that illustrate the style in which users browse the content of a site: quick scanning, partial reading and reading.

Heatmaps from eyetracking studies: The areas where users looked the most are darkest; the lightest areas indicate fewer views, followed by the least-viewed areas.

The recommended solution to banner blindness is to make the ad reflect the content of the site it's on:

- The more an ad looks like a native site component, the more users will look at it.

- Not only should the ad look like the site's other design elements, it should appear to be part of the specific page section in which it's displayed.
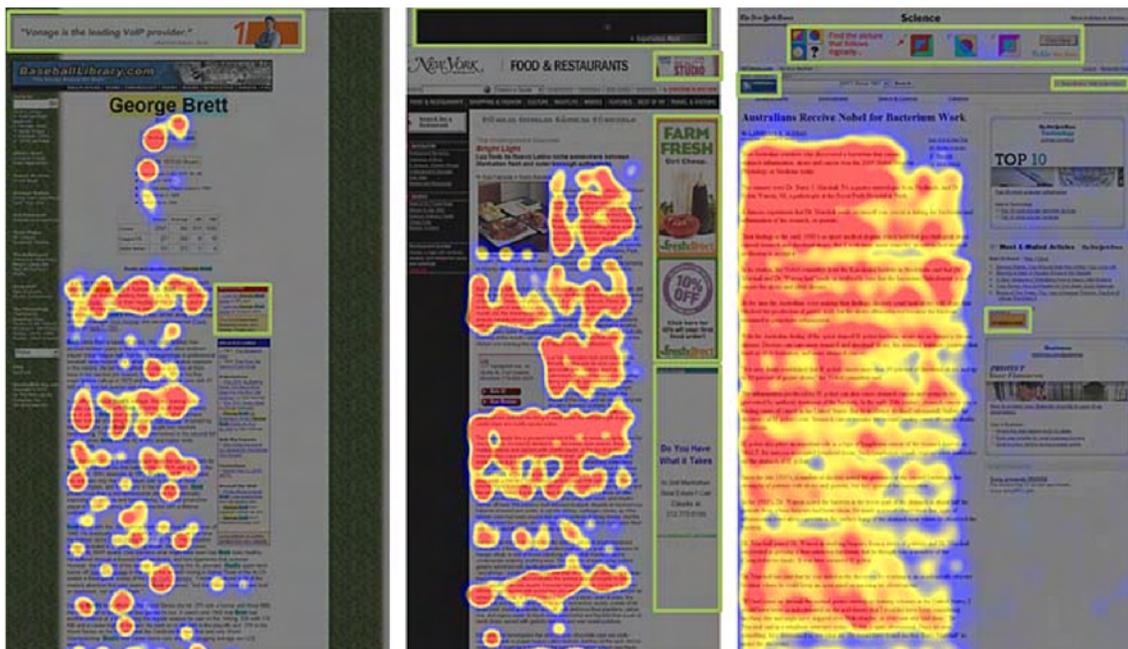
Appendix F

City of Kitchener, Online Communications Strategy
Facebook Disclaimer

Rules of the Game:

Fans are welcome to post comments on our wall however we expect everyone who participates in online commentary with us to follow a few simple rules. Please keep your comments clean and respectful.
The city reserves the right to remove any posts or content that do not meet the guidelines noted below:

We do not allow comments that do not meet the following criteria:

- Provides the personal information of individuals.
- Promotes, perpetuate or foster discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, nationality, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation.
- Is a personal attack on an individual or specific group.
- Is profane or abusive.
- Is sexually explicit or link to content that is sexually explicit.
- Conducts or encourages illegal activity.
- Is commercial in nature and is attempting to advertise, promote or sell products or services of an individual or an individual business
- Is for the purposes of promoting a candidate for municipal, provincial or federal election.
- May tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems.
- Violates a legal ownership interest of another party.
- Does not comply with municipal, provincial or federal legislation.
- Promotes an individual religion or religious service.

Notwithstanding the criteria listed above, the city reserves the right to post, refuse to post, or remove, any event from its Facebook page at any time, without notice.

These rules might sound strict and contain a bit of legal-sounding jargon, but please keep in mind, the overall goal is simple: to ensure that we can all participate online in a respectful, relevant way.

Community events::

Members of the public are also welcome to submit event information for inclusion on the city's Facebook page if that event is open to the general public, occurs within the boundaries of the Region of Waterloo and meets one of the following criteria:l.

- Organized or funded by another order of government.
- Organized by a government-funded agency or board.
- Organized by a City of Kitchener affiliated group.

- An organization identified as eligible for a City of Kitchener community grant (Tier One or Tier Two) under the city's Community Investment Strategy Policy.
- Funded in full, or in part, by the City of Kitchener.
- Sponsored by the City of Kitchener.
- Organized by a charitable organization with a registered charitable number and operating within the City of Kitchener.
- Organized by a service club operating within the City of Kitchener performing work that benefits Kitchener residents.
- Organized by a business improvement area for general promotional purposes.
- Located in a facility owned or leased by the City of Kitchener.

Events deemed by the City of Kitchener to be political in nature will not be posted after the writ has been dropped for a federal or provincial election, or after the 1st day of a municipal election year.

We remind also you:

To protect your privacy.

When you registered for your Facebook account, you provided personal information to Facebook. And since then, you may have added even more information and photos to your profile. We feel an obligation to remind you that if you don't have your privacy settings restricted, then anyone who is a fan of our page could potentially view your personal information. We strongly encourage you to review your personal privacy settings and remind you that if you don't restrict your privacy settings, then you have consented to the display and release of your personal information.

About your personal information.

Personal information, which includes your Internet Provider (IP) address, is being collected, managed, processed and or stored by a third party service provider and is therefore, not in the sole domain, custody and control of the City of Kitchener. Additionally, your personal information may cross the border to a foreign jurisdiction and will therefore, be subject to the governing laws of that jurisdiction.

What may happen to content posted to our page.

While the City of Kitchener will always take a balanced approach between reaching out to citizens in the ways that you're used to – through venues like public meetings, and opportunities to provide feedback on our website – we also recognize that real-time platforms, like Facebook, provide us with a great way to reach you where you are – rather than you coming to us.

- We will post topics and updates on city activities and, from time to time, we'll ask for your feedback. This information will be reported back to staff, and sometimes Council, and will continually be monitored.

- We will strive to be current, responsive to comments that contain inaccurate or inappropriate content.

We look forward to hearing from you.