Making Social Media Part of the Uniform

How policing solutions use #socialmedia
to #buildcommunities and #fightcrime

High performance. Delivered.

Introduction

Policing is a people business. Whether seeking witnesses, supporting victims or liaising with local leaders, the police rely on human interaction and community involvement. Social media offers real-time access to tech-savvy, digitally-ready members of the public. Whether tweeting information or offering online portals to ease access to officers, police teams understand that social media can enhance the dialogue with citizens and make best use of their organization's own limited resources. Combining power and productivity, social media is far more the rule than the exception in both the commercial and political world. The majority of *Fortune* 500 companies find social media essential to their operations and continually look for new ways to use it. According to a report from the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, 34 percent of this year's *Fortune* 500 companies are actively blogging, 77 percent maintain active Twitter accounts, 70 percent have Facebook pages, and 69 percent have YouTube accounts; usage of each platform increasing by about 4 percent among the top 500 from 2013. In short, social media is no longer a "nice to have," but vital for law enforcement operations.

Social media's coming of age

With a 20 percent increase in smartphone usage and tablet growth outstripping PCs on their best day, social distribution is happening fast. In fact, according to trend-watcher Mary Meeker, an average article reaches half of total social referrals in six and a half hours on Twitter and nine hours on Facebook[1]. Such access to shared information is not lost on the police—and can be tailored to meet the needs, experience and resources of different forces in a number of ways. Using the law enforcement social media maturity model (see right), police organizations can assess where their agency is today in relation to other law enforcement agencies with respect to the integration of social media within their operations. From here, the model can illustrate the potential for advanced capabilities when higher levels of integration are embraced.

[1] Source: Internet Trends 2014, (Mary Meeker) May 28, 2014

Social Media Maturity Model

The IACP Center for Social Media and Accenture developed the social media maturity model based on leading practices and interviews with several police departments.

The model helps law enforcement agencies better assess their existing and potential social media capabilities.

Integrate

Define policy and accountability

- Embed governance
- Develop policy surrounding social media
- Leadership commitment
- Social media is an accepted part of the culture
- Designate personnel to represent the department
- Dedicate resources if available
- Provide social media training to representatives
- Determine social media strategy (centralized or decentralized)
- Integrate social media into strategy (crisis communications, recruiting, etc.)

Inform and Listen

Engage the community and build trust

- Commit to two-way engagement
- Respond to citizens' concerns
- Provide accurate case-related information
- Produce traffic and weather reports
- Communicate crisis response

Social media brings policing benefits such as:

- Increased detection of criminal activity
- Enhanced ability to combat new types of crime
- Increased citizen satisfaction
- Improved operational effectiveness and intelligence
- Greater return on investments

Collaborate

Collaborate internally

- Share best practices throughout divisions within the agency
- Develop employee relationships, awareness, and morale

Collaborate externally

- Share best practices between agencies
- Consider joining/forming a regional networking group
- Liaison with local media
- Leverage the community to solve problems

Detect

Enhance situational awareness

- Real-time intelligence
- Constantly listen to social media buzz (pre-crime confession, organized threats)
- Global positioning of social media users, determine witnesses present at a crime scene

Crisis management

- Assess damage
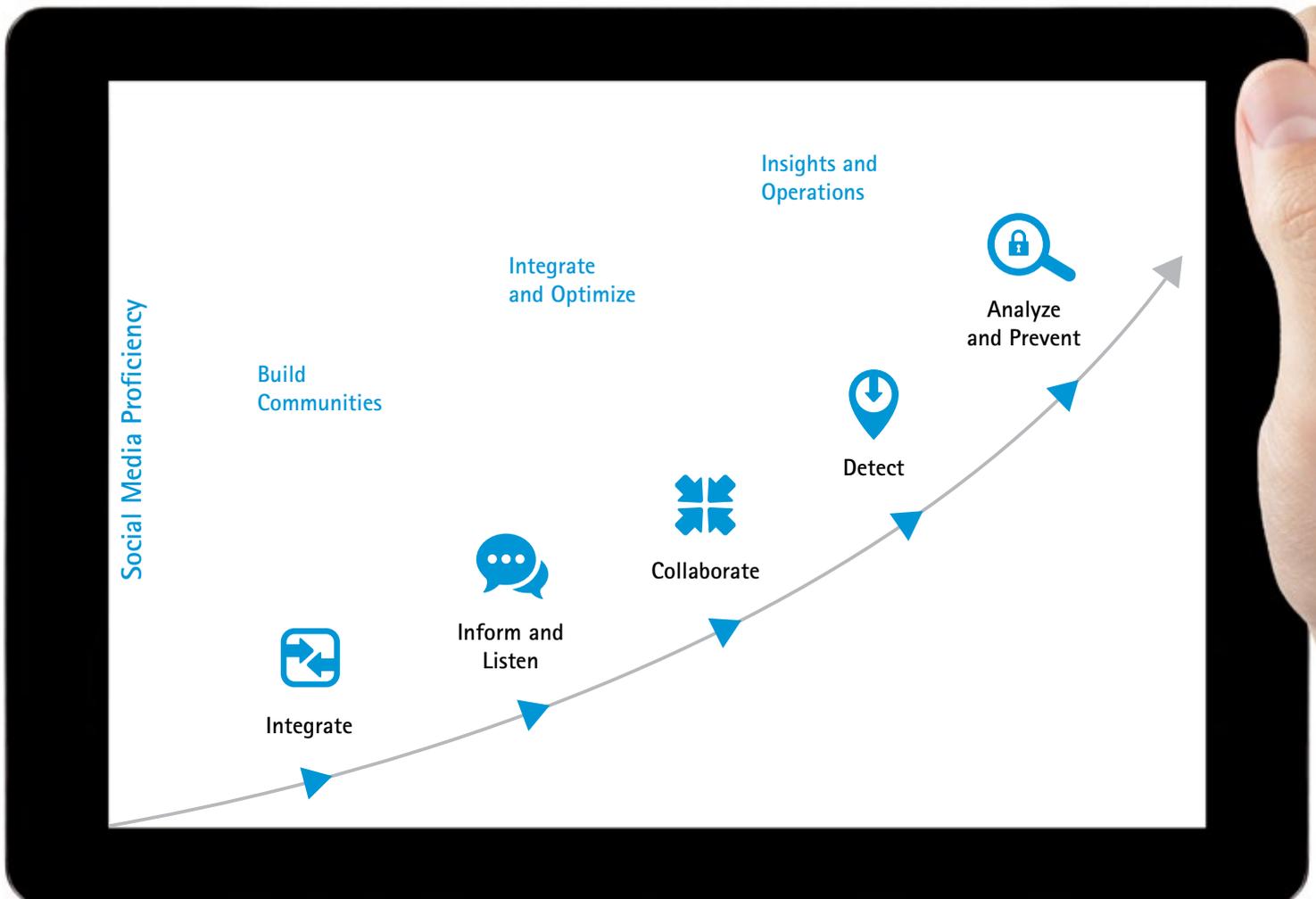- Control rumors and provide accurate information

Analyze and Prevent

Predictive policing

- Analyze social media for crime-related buzz words
- Activity-based trends tracked by location

Integrating social media with all data sources

- Case files and databases
- Crime reports by location
- Gobal Positioning System data
- All publicly available data

Social Media Proficiency

- Integrate
- Inform and Listen
- Collaborate
- Detect
- Analyze and Prevent

- Build Communities
- Integrate and Optimize
- Insights and Operations

*Note that not all aspects of the model may be appropriate or practical for all law enforcement agencies; however, each agency can use the model to think broadly and evaluate various options when expanding their social media endeavors.

#gettingstarted

So perhaps you are already committed to putting social media at the heart of your operations—where next? An initial consideration is the policy behind the process. First, determine who will have the authority to disseminate information on your police force's behalf, and the nature of your organization's "voice." Once agreed, provide training to those responsible. Each organization is unique, and the size and scope of operations often dictates whether to centralize or decentralize public posting authority. For example, if you have a small organization with limited resources, consider delegating authority across all units within the department or using officers who volunteer for the task. Your organization must decide its own structure, with formal training for social media designees so that the agency projects one coherent and consistent voice.

#buildtrust

Communications are only effective if they are heard or seen and understood. In social media terms, this means developing a critical mass of "followers." For a law enforcement agency, building a virtual network often begins with building trust among the local community. Social media helps to demonstrate organizational transparency, giving insight into the personalities, culture and way of working. In addition, a continuous stream of reliable information about ongoing cases, events in the local neighborhood, or even traffic and weather, can result in a community relying on these updates as a trusted news source.

However, communication is not a one-way street. Rather, you need to consider information sharing as part of a two-way dialogue that creates a virtual community. When there is evidence that the organization is listening and approachable, trust is established, encouraging active participation.

Sergeant Sean Whitcomb, Seattle Police Department Social media technology isn't novel anymore. This is something agencies need to be trained on.

Like • Comment • Share

Chief Billy Grogan, Dunwoody Police Department Lessons Learned: Officers with a high interest in social media are more engaged and active on behalf of the organization.

Like • Comment • Share

Public Information Officer Sherry Bray, Kentucky State Police With a centralized approach we are able to have one voice and one tone.

Like • Comment • Share

Sergeant Sean Whitcomb, Seattle Police Department Social media is our electronic way of community policing. It's the same as a citizen flagging down a police officer to ask a question. With social media, we are better able to engage with the community and, in many ways, we are more accessible.

Like • Comment • Share

Update Status | Add Photos/video

The case of the missing burrito

The Palo Alto California Police Department is committed to two-way communications between its organization and the community, whatever the age group. To engage local teens, it is important to be active on the same wavelength, using the apps—and attitude—with which they are most familiar. In the United States, a group of local high school students tweeted a tongue-in-cheek SOS late one night to the Palo Alto Police Department asking for assistance in locating a "Missing in Action" burrito. The social media team played along, and responded with a humorous tweet that saw 50 more teen followers joining their community—a breakthrough with an age bracket that is typically difficult to reach.

Going along for a virtual ride

United States' Palo Alto police Chief, Dennis Burns, took to the streets to host a virtual 12-hour ride-along in February 2013. The Palo Alto Police Department gave followers a virtual front seat view of a night in the life of the Palo Alto police via Twitter @ PaloAltoPolice. Tweeting regular updates of encounters, citations, arrests, and snack breaks, Chief Burns and crew not only showed the community what it takes to protect and serve, but also gave citizens a glimpse of normally unseen real-world police business. The Palo Alto police are leading the way in terms of using unconventional media to reach a larger audience, with several initiatives targeted at hard-to-reach community members.
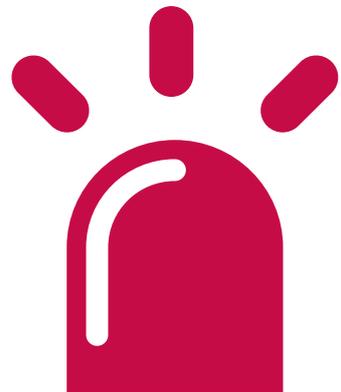
Viral Q&A

The United States' Ocean County Police Department's social media team hosted one of the first live chat session over Facebook with the local community. For several hours, a team of officers responded to questions that poured in via Facebook postings on topics that included everything from clarification on local laws to the origins of the word "cop." The community hailed the session as the "best community policing event" in which they had participated.

Post

As the examples above show, using social media to share the efforts of your departments and officers going above and beyond the call of duty helps to not only build trust among community members, but also has the potential to yield equally important benefits within the police organization. Public recognition of individuals for their achievements and extraordinary service is known to increase morale and, in the long term, can create a more fulfilled force.
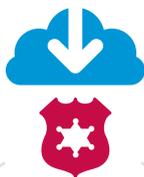
#jointhediscussion

Although social media is still a relatively new concept, there are leading practices from which you can benefit. By its very nature, social media is about collaboration, so team with others to make the best use of what it offers. If your region has a social media networking group, join the group to listen and contribute to the lessons learned and success stories in your area. If your region does not run a regional networking group, consider forming one—or join the discussion online at www.iacpsocialmedia.org.

Having built a strong community of followers, it is vital to maintain interest— and use as many avenues as possible to share information. Law enforcement organizations that are successfully leveraging their networks are linking with other powerful groups, such as local media, to extend their reach into their community. Many law enforcement organizations are achieving success through using the community to identify suspects for a myriad of different crimes.

Update Status | Add Photos/video

Tweeting the crime

The United States' Seattle Police Department has taken collaboration to heart by offering the community the means to help it solve crimes. They created a special Twitter account, @getyourcarback, as a way to share information exclusively about stolen vehicles. The police agency then broadcasts the car details to the community—opening up the crime-solving potential to a vast number of people. The program has been successful at both reuniting community members with their vehicles and also raising awareness about the number and extent of stolen vehicles in the area.
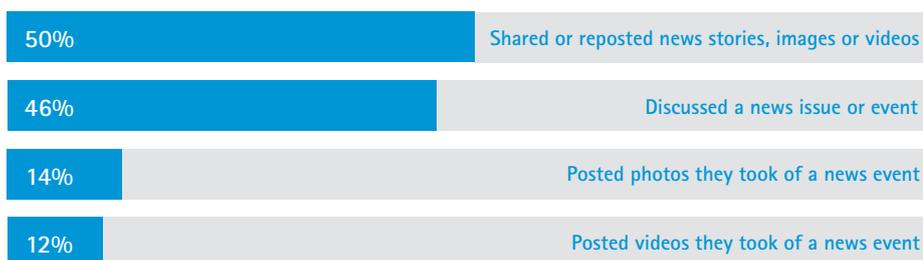
Caring about sharing

The United States' Kentucky State Police has noticed an increase in cases being solved through making one minor change to its social media strategy—asking the community to share. The Police Department has found that providing clear guidance and requests for assistance in social media outlets, such as simply stating "please share," on a posting about a crime, increases the number of views and the likelihood of solving the case.

Post

Figure 1. Shared intelligence

50%	Shared or reposted news stories, images or videos
46%	Discussed a news issue or event
14%	Posted photos they took of a news event
12%	Posted videos they took of a news event

Fifty percent of social networking site users have shared or reposted news stories, images or videos and 14 percent of those surveyed have posted photos they took of a news event.

Note: This question was asked of social networking site users who also access news online.
Source: Pew Research Center, telephone survey, March 2014.

#increaseintelligence

Once your community is well established, social media can be used to enhance situational awareness and manage crisis situations. Regardless of the size of your organization or the resources available, you can begin to access and use real-time intelligence via the social media channels. While it is important to know the climate of your community and social media policies first and foremost, even smaller agencies can increase their situational awareness through social media. From responding to citizen tips on social media to geo-sensing witnesses who may have been present near a crime scene and who could provide valuable evidence, social media can gather intelligence and detect crimes. In a recent survey, 50 percent of social networking site users were found to have shared or reposted news stories, images or videos. In this way, social media has the ability to gain its own momentum and help law enforcement officers gain superior intelligence. (see Figure 1).

With increasing numbers of people looking to social media as a news outlet, law enforcement organizations have an opportunity to not only gather additional information regarding a crisis, but also control the information released to the public, ensuring it is accurate and timely. Use your social media strategy to guide your crisis communications plan, such as dedicating a resource to monitor, respond to, and provide real-time accurate information via social media, liaising with local media to inform citizens, or setting up a new social media page specific to the crisis. Social media facilitates the effective management of crises by offering an additional channel to assess damage, control rumors, and provide accurate information.
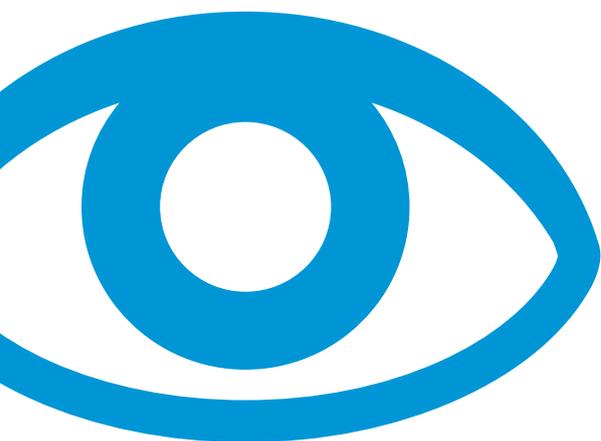
Social media manhunt

United States, Palo Alto Police Department used social media to control public awareness during a rush-hour manhunt. During the manhunt, the agency used social media to relay real-time, accurate information and monitor false rumors. Instead of calling the police agency, local media sources followed and relayed messages from its social media accounts. The Palo Alto Police Department was able to provide accurate information to the media and community, and, in turn, devote more time and resources to apprehending the suspect.

Post

Catching citizens' attention—and predators

When a police case has turned cold yet no leaf has been left unturned, where next? United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) turned to the public. Motivated by unsolved child exploitation cases, HSI developed the Operation Predator app to track down known child predator fugitives and identify suspects. Created in just a few weeks by a police employee, the information in the app is a virtual "wanted" poster. The app integrates with HSI's social media channels to reach the broader public and is often shared by Public Information Officers in the suspects' region, helping to maximize coverage. According to ICE.gov "The Operation Predator app enables users to receive alerts about wanted predators, to share the information with friends via e-mail and social media tools, and to provide information to HSI by calling or submitting an online tip. Additionally, the app enables users to view news about arrests and prosecutions of child predators and additional resources about ICE and its global partners in the fight against child exploitation."

The Operation Predator app routes user-generated information to the trained professionals of the ICE tip-line (866-DHS-2-ICE) to be processed—and with resounding success. The app has allowed ICE to closed 10 of the 15 unsolved cases that were featured via the app.

Post

Once your law enforcement organization is effectively using social media to collaborate with the community and across agencies, enhance situational awareness, and manage crises, you are now in a position to collect and analyze social media data, metrics, and trends to predict and prevent crime. Predictive policing and digital integration can mean that social media feedback is analyzed for crime-related buzz words and activity based on trends by location. Consider going digital by integrating social media with various internal and external data sources. Start small by conducting keyword searches on social media or analyzing case files or location trends. Scale up by investing in digital analysis software or collaborating with a regional organization to share resources. Use your social media insights for better policing operations and share your knowledge with other agencies whenever possible.

Chief Billy Grogan, Dunwoody Police Department [Social media] is about evolving. We will continue to evolve.

Like • Comment • Share

#integrateoperations

The next frontier for social media is fully integrating it into police operations. Seamless integration between 911 operations, command centers, public information officers, tip lines and social media will not only provide better communications, but also provide more information on how and when to deploy limited resources.

#betterpolicing

Using social media, your law enforcement organization has an opportunity to share information more effectively to improve police operations. Once you have allocated the best resources to suit your own organization's needs, be creative in how you use social media in your local community. Social media erases traditional barriers, such as geographic location, that hinder access to resources. Flexible and easily managed, social media can provide added benefits to law enforcement operations at every phase of implementation, from inform and listen stages through to analyzing and preventing crime. Find out what works for you. Whatever the size of your organization, you can realize rewards by taking steps toward making social media an essential element of your police operations.

About IACP

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) is a dynamic organization that serves as the professional voice of law enforcement. Building on our past success, the IACP addresses cutting-edge issues confronting law enforcement though advocacy, programs, and research, as well as training and other professional services. IACP is a comprehensive professional organization that supports the law enforcement leaders of today and develops the leaders of tomorrow. IACP launched its Center for Social Media in October 2010. The goal of the Center is to build the capacity of law enforcement to use social media to prevent and solve crimes, strengthen police-community relations, and enhance services. IACP's Center for Social Media serves as a clearinghouse of information and no-cost resources to help law enforcement personnel develop or enhance their agency's use of social media and integrate Web 2.0 tools into agency operations. For more information, please contact: socialmedia@theiacp.org.

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