

DAILY OUTREACH

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This can seem really overwhelming and to be honest, taking on all forms of social media at once where daily interactions can build your audience is not recommended. Pick one, build your audience and then add another one if you see a good fit for it.

There are social media management tools (like Hootsuite.com) that allow you to create posts, schedule when they post and to share posts across platforms. That's an option if you find that sort of tool helpful. If you find using a scheduling tool overwhelming, then it is also an option to simplify by using one social media platform at a time.



IF YOU DECIDE TO USE MULTIPLE SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS – HERE ARE SOME BASIC TIPS THAT APPLY TO ALL:

PROFILE PICTURE

Use the same professional picture across your platforms. This doesn't need to be the typical head shot in front of a plain background – unless that makes sense for your profession. But it should be professional and one where people can see your face. In Extension, a photo of you in front of a corn field (where you can see your face) may be a good fit. The reason I mention a corn field is because it's a tall crop. So, you can easily zoom in on your face while having the crop backdrop.

ORGANIZATION NAME

Be sure to include this so that they know it's a professional social media account.

COVER PHOTO

This should be striking and interesting. You can also change this depending on the season and it can vary across your social media accounts.

LINK TO WEBSITE

This will drive people to your other content.

GET FOLLOWERS

When you create a new social media account, be sure to promote it on your webpage by providing a link, send an email announcing about this new resource to your email list serve, be sure to tag others you work with in a post to make sure they know you're there and have an account.

GENERAL CONTENT

On social media, the rule of thumb is 20% about you and 80% of content that appeals to your followers. This is how you make a post personal but also professional.

Example: A post may say, “The DIRT Workshop will be on December 8-9. To Register: DIRTworkshopND.com”. Sure, that has information, but it lacks personality. Instead try posting: “Join me at the #DIRTworkshopND on December 8-9. I’ll be enjoying this one from the comfort of my home since it’s VIRTUAL! To register: DIRTworkshopND.com @NDSUsoilhealth @NDSUExtension”

DON'T GET TOO PERSONAL

Though a certain level of personality helps in social media, don't post too many personal details. First, this is a professional account. Next, you want to stay safe. Avoid posting your birthdate, pics of your kids (where you can see their face or school uniform etc.), anything that indicates where you live. It's important to be safe, remember, there are some creeps out there that are using social media for the wrong reasons. If you get that nervous feeling in your gut about a follower, you can block them.

AVOID POLITICS AND RELIGION

Just like the rules at the dinner table, those apply to social media. It's best to avoid political or religious posts on your professional account. This includes scrolling by and not hitting the “like button” for anything that is political or religious. Your followers can see what posts you “like”, so just leave this out of the equation and stay neutral.

USE LINKS

The goal of a social media post is to drive traffic to another resource. For example, you post about the DIRT workshop, but you also provide a link to the webpage DIRTworkshopND.com so that people will go check out the agenda and hopefully register. If you post on a specific soil health topic, find a video on our YouTube channel to link to so people can get more information. Send your follower down a “meaningful” rabbit hole of information!

INCLUDE IMAGES

It's important to post more than words, images will cause those scrolling to stop on your post.

TAG TOPICS AND PEOPLE

The # and @ are your best friends in social media! The # allows your content to come up during a search. For example, #soilhealth will make sure your post comes up when someone searches “soil health”. Don't create lengthy hash tags that won't ever be searched, like #AlwaysOnTheRun, that doesn't relate specifically to your content and won't help you gain followers. Use the simple hashtags that are content related. Tagging a person (using the @ and their handle/name) lets them know you posted something that may be of interest to them. Then they may share your post.

ENCOURAGE CONVERSATION

Create posts that encourage people to respond. And then be sure to respond to their post if you think more clarification is needed or “like” their response to let them know you saw it (if you agree with it), don't leave them hanging.

BE KIND AND PROFESSIONAL

Be cautious in your wording to avoid offending anyone. Read your post, then re-read your post before actually posting. Remember, there aren't edit buttons in social media. You'll know when you messed up on a post...your followers will certainly let you know in their responses! But don't take that to heart, just use it to reframe your content to be more neutral.

The Facebook logo, consisting of the word "facebook" in a blue, lowercase, sans-serif font, with a registered trademark symbol (®) to the right. The logo is centered within a white rounded rectangle with a thin grey border.

FACEBOOK

This is the largest of the social networks with 2.5 billion active monthly users with 1.66 billion of those being mobile daily users. You'll likely find old high school buddies or college roommates on Facebook, but always keep in mind your targeted audience for your professional account. It may seem rude to not friend them, but it is important that you stay focused on your professional world and not your personal. This will also keep you from spending too much time on Facebook with those rabbit hole searches.

There are all kinds of metrics available about users, posts etc. It's recommended to post on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursdays between 9:00 – 2:00 for the most engagement. You can search some of those to find more information on when to post. In general, think about when your intended audience is active and looking for content.

You can use the Facebook live tool also to host live events for your followers.



TWITTER

An excellent way to reach an agricultural audience is through Twitter - with 330 million active users monthly and 500 million tweets sent per day. The character limit keeps posts short and to the point.

BEING BRIEF:

Pick a good handle (or your @ name) that is short and easy to remember so that you'll get tagged by others on Twitter. Getting tagged in other tweets means you gain more visibility and likely more followers. For Example, Abbey Wick is @NDSUsOilHealth which identifies both affiliation and program while being easy to remember. When a farmer posts something soil health related in the northern plains, they likely tag @NDSUsOilHealth in that tweet.

Shorten weblinks/url's using Bitly.com or Ow.ly (which is in the Hootsuite.com scheduling program dashboard). Having a short weblink included in your tweet leaves more room for explanation or content.

Don't abbreviate the short stuff. Avoid using "b" instead of "be" or "2" instead of "two". However, using "Mgt" instead of "Management" is acceptable. This is because short words should not be abbreviated, but long words can be abbreviated and still remain professional.

Proofread your Tweets. In being brief, we can make mistakes, so it is always important to re-read your tweets before posting for the whole world to see. Nothing worse than getting a lot of likes or re-tweets on a post with typos.

GAINING FOLLOWERS:

Select key organizations and individuals to follow. If you are re-tweeted by an individual with a lot of followers, you will likely pick up a few new followers yourself. Tag relevant organizations in your tweets so that they may also re-tweet your content. For example, tag the ND Corn Council (@NDcorn) in a tweet about managing a corn crop.

High value content should always take precedence over number of tweets. This will keep people interested your tweets and to intrigue them enough to have them follow you. Make sure that the information you post is informative and interesting.

Mix up your content to help keep interest. If you post all the same thing, people will lose interest. Mix it up and post diverse content that is related to your position professionally.

Get out and Tweet. If you have great content, then share it. Don't get paralyzed by the guidelines listed above of high value content or mixing up your content. In agriculture and especially Extension, content can come from pulling off the side of the road to take a pic of a farmer's field where there is excellent weed control, where they are using soil health practices or you found a disease that you want to bring awareness to. But be sensitive to the privacy of that farmer if you are posting agronomic content. Don't tag them if it's something they wouldn't want the whole world knowing. If there is something recognizable on the horizon in your photo, crop it out. Keep things generic and non-farm specific if you can.



LINKEDIN

This is primarily a site for business professionals and can be highly effective with 500 million members. Content posted on LinkedIn will likely be different than what you post on Facebook or Twitter. It will be more about your profession and should be primarily highlights of content, not all your content.

First things first, be sure to **complete your FULL profile**. Take a day to add in all of your information that is meaningful to your profession – treat it as an online resume. Your profile should be error-free, so be sure to proof-read it also.

Next, **build up your connections** by requesting to connect with past and current colleagues, former classmates or other alumni, industrial professionals and leaders. Your connections may give you endorsements for skill sets. The best way to get endorsements is by giving them. Take the time to give endorsements for close connections and you may receive them in return.

Be active by **joining groups**, commenting on other posts and responding to messages and connection requests. A stagnant, inactive account can be more detrimental than no account at all. So, be sure to stay active and responsive.

Lastly, utilize this resource as both a way to share information that you have but more so to **make important professional connections**. This makes LinkedIn a little different from Facebook or Twitter where your primary goal may be sharing content. On LinkedIn, you're focused on making professional connections.

SAFETY/PRECAUTIONARY:

Most important to all of this is to be safe. Don't post anything that will jeopardize you personally. This means, don't include your date of birth on your social media sites and use different passwords from your financial accounts.

If you are traveling or in remote areas, don't post where you are while you are there. Wait to share that information until you are back at the office or somewhere safe.

Before you post, remember that you are basically putting that information on an online billboard that anyone, really anyone, can see. If you think it's something that you don't want a stranger knowing, then don't post it.

DAILY

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