

Tool: BRAIN: getting the most from social media

UK internet-users now spend more time on social media than any other activity online. While this undoubtedly makes it an important means of communicating with stakeholders, online engagement is both easy to learn and hard to master. To make the process easier, it is worth engaging BRAIN:

- 1. Brevity.** New content is constantly being produced on social networks, on every topic which might take a person's interest and—like it or not—social media tends to be a recreational activity, so very few stakeholders are likely to be looking for the opportunity to engage with a local authority. To encourage users not to gloss over your online engagement it is important to keep its content brief, regardless of whether it's a written post or a video. The less words you use, the more words get heard. TL;DR, keep it as brief as you possibly can.
- 2. Regularity.** With the exception of paid advertising, social media is an opt-in medium. To engage people you need to either get them to connect to your channel or have someone they are connected to share it. The more regularly you update your channel, the more likely it is to be connected to and have its content shared, giving your engagement activity its best chance of success.
- 3. Images.** The old adage is true, a picture is worth a thousand words, and that goes for video too. Images draw the eye and make it easier for users to quickly get to grips with the message being put across. Consequently, content with images are far more likely to be engaged with than those without. It is worth including pictures, moving or otherwise, in as much content as possible.
- 4. Audience.** Knowing your audience is an important part of making a success of social media engagement. Different networks have different audiences, but it is also vital to consider what images and messaging are most likely to appeal to the stakeholders you are trying to engage. While paid-for advertising has attracted a fair amount of controversy of late, that controversy exists for a reason: the level of information social networks have on their users makes their advertising tools incredibly effective at getting content through to the exact audience clients are seeking to access.
- 5. Network.** There are already a wide range of social networks councils can engage with in undertaking online engagement, each with their own strengths and weaknesses. While some presence across all the major networks is advisable, it's important to make sure that you use the right network for the type of engagement you are trying to run.

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