RHSU

leadership elections

Social Media Top Tips

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Social Media Top Tips

Why is social media so important?

- A chance to make a great first impression.
- Potential first port of call for supporters/voters
- Reach a wider audience than you can with face-to-face campaigning

Unless they already know you, it is quite likely that the first time a student will become aware of you (and your campaign) is through either the website (Candidate Hub) or social media.

With that in mind, it's really important that you make a great first impression as you could very quickly gain supporters who will ultimately back your campaign and vote for you (yay!)

Obviously, you may be doing a lot of in-person campaigning, but social media gives you an opportunity to reach a much wider audience across the campaign period.

It's also worth considering establishing your own 'elections brand' so that students associate your campaign materials with you. This can be very impactful but please be careful to not include any RHSU or RHUL branding, colour schemes, or mascots on your posts.

Managing social media

- Who are your audiences?
- What kind of content are they looking for?
- Plan your content
- Make use of scheduling tools e.g.
  Buffer / Hootsuite / Sprout Social/ Meta Business Suite

In terms of managing your social media, it's first important to think about who your audience is. For the Sabbatical Officer roles, it's obviously all students but there will be certain groups of students who have even more interest in a particular role e.g. student group/committee members for Societies & Sport, academic reps for VP Education and Community members for Wellbeing & Diversity. For Department/Faculty Rep positions, you are obviously to looking to appeal to all students on your course and within the wider Department or Faculty.

The next consideration is the type of content that your audience is likely to consume. You will have your own candidate web page but your campaign will need to look beyond the written word and consider the use of photography/video and other interactive elements to make the content more interesting and digestible.

While the campaign period lasts over two weeks, you may not be able to dedicate every day to posting with existing commitments. We'd encourage you to plan your content in advance – whether this is recording videos, writing down the copy for a post etc.

This year, the first week of campaigning falls over reading week so you may want to consider utilising your social media throughout that week and turning your attention to in person campaigning during the voting period.

We'll go through the specific channels shortly and while this won't be appropriate for Instagram, you may wish to explore social media scheduling tools such as Buffer / Hootsuite / Sprout Social and the free trials that they offer. If not, even good old-fashioned pen and paper or a Google Calendar would be beneficial.

Choosing the right channel

We're now going to look at some specific channels you may wish to make use of. This list obviously isn't exhaustive, these are just the channels that we currently have at the SU.

You may wish to explore other options such as LinkedIn or any other channel that you feel will be engaging and help to boost your campaign efforts.

I'll start by saying that Facebook for example isn't where we'd expect you to be focusing your efforts. Instagram and Tiktok being a much more likely destination for your target audience and offering a range of different functions that the other platforms lack.

Instagram

It's probably the best channel for engagement with your target audience and its real benefit is its versatility with multiple ways to engage with followers.

Among other great tools, you can post photos, stories, videos, reels and live streams in a way that allows for great interactivity and engagement.

For us at the SU, most of our social media focus is now on Instagram and our followers just keep growing and growing, compared to Facebook which has remained pretty stagnant over the last few years.

Instagram Feed

- Photo grid that appears on the first tab of your profile
- Use it for key updates / manifesto points.
- Timeless, something you want people to look back at.

You may wish to use this space for a 'carousel' of images with information, but you should consider whether this is the best way to display the information. Could it be more appropriate to post one image and then use Stories/Highlights to display the information in a more digestible format?

In terms of how often you should post here, it's generally recommended to post at least once per day, and no more than 3 times per day. However, this may depend on the aesthetic that you choose to go with.

Bare minimum: once a week. Better: 3 times a week. Optimal: once or twice a day.

Some tips to make your main videos effective and accessible:

- Make them one minute or shorter

- Tell students how they can get involved
- Write a description along with your video
- Add subtitles

Instagram Stories

Instagram Stories help users to create a bigger, richer story than a series of individual photos/ videos can provide.

Stories are temporary - they hang around for 24 hours before disappearing (although you can ensure longevity by adding them to Highlights)

They include loads of interactive features including polls / questions / emoji slider stickers / countdown / quizzes – all of which are great for audience engagement and avoid your content becoming too dry.

Stories also allow you to come out from behind your profile and display your personality – showing the human side of your brand/campaign will be really important and allows students to really engage with you as an individual.

Some tips to make your IG stories impactful are:

- Make use of templates
- Make sure you adhere to the 'safe area' to ensure important info isn't covered
- Add emojis, questions, polls, etc. to make it more interactive.

Instagram Reels

- Reels posted to the main Instagram feed - up to 60 minutes long.
- Opportunity to tell engaging and compelling stories through video.

They are really good if:

- You need to say something important that is longer than 1 minute
- You want to share your campaign video
- Good for an original vlog about how your workday is going, or to specifically talk about a certain topic

Instagram Live

- Allows you to share images or videos, invite others to co-host in a split screen, or simply share your camera screen to your viewers.
- Share your live to your stories for 24 hours, or tap the "save" icon in the top left to add the video to your camera roll.

They are useful for fun or important updates, and they're a great tool to interact with other

users.

They allow you to share images or videos, invite others to co-host in a split screen, or simply share your camera screen to your viewers.

You can share your live to your stories for 24 hours, or save it to your camera roll – after you've ended your live broadcast you can tap Download video to save the video to your phone's camera roll. Bear in mind that only the video is saved, and not things such as comments, likes and viewers.

Some tips to make your IG live streams great are:

- Make sure you have a clear structure of what you're going to say before starting the live.
- Do a joined live with someone else – e.g. a member of a student group to make it interactive.
- Answer questions that you get on the spot and be interactive with the students engaging with the live stream.

TikTok

First and foremost, TikTok is an excellent platform for building brand awareness. Candidates can create short videos that showcase their personality, their vision, and their campaign promises. These videos can be shared on other social media platforms, such as Instagram, Facebook and Twitter, and can help to spread the word about your campaign

Secondly, TikTok allows for real-time engagement with followers. You all can create videos that allow you to interact with your followers and answer questions. This can help to build trust and establish a connection with voters.

Thirdly, TikTok has a unique algorithm that can help you to reach a wider audience. The platform's algorithm recommends content to users based on their interests and engagement history. This means that even if a user is not following you, they may still be recommended their content.

1. Make a new account to post on – don't use your current account. This allows you to align with your brand campaign and engage with similar content to use the algorithm to your favour.

2. Start small, and don't over-think it!

3. Look out for trends and use the algorithm to your benefit – let the app do the hard work for you by following these trends – the algorithm likes that!

4. Linking to that, take note of hashtags, and use them to your advantage. Use trending BUT RELEVANT hashtags (that's very important!). Also, use one unique hashtag that works for you, so all your videos are under one hashtag.

In conclusion, TikTok is an excellent platform for you to engage with students, build brand

awareness, and reach a wider audience. By creating engaging and informative content, candidates can establish a connection with voters and help to spread the word about their campaign.

Facebook

Five years ago you'd almost certainly have been using Facebook to push your campaign but the number of users (and crucially engaged users) for your target audience has been declining rapidly over the last few years with users shifting over to platforms including Instagram, TikTok and Snapchat.

Having said that, you may feel that Facebook is worth exploring – one thing you can do is invite all of your friends to like your page which may be a quick way to boost your number of followers/ supporters.

If you do decide to use your own social media or create a new account for the purpose of campaigning, we'd recommend that you only post 1 or 2 things on your profile each day. If not, content becomes very saturated and users will likely miss some of what you're sharing. Also, just as an FYI, Too many updates" is the #1 reason people unfollow Fan Pages.

Consistency of posting

- Posting too little on your accounts can lead to students losing interest and forgetting that you exist.
- But posting too often can lead to students feeling overwhelmed with so much content and choosing to unfollow you.
- So it's important to find a point in-between, to ensure that you and your content stays relevant, without overcrowding students' feeds.
- Think weekly rather than daily.

Be inclusive

- Make text accessible
- Use inclusive language. Avoid ableist language, stick with gender-neutral pronouns and terms, share diverse voices and emojis, and avoid assuming knowledge
- Use subtitles / image captions
- Promote positive inclusion

https://blog.hootsuite.com/inclusive-design-social-media/

Make text accessible

Writing with clarity makes text more accessible and understandable. And that benefits

everyone. It's as simple as that.

Before you hit publish, consider how assistive tools like screen readers will read your copy. What about people who are learning English as a second language? Or those with learning disabilities or limited familiarity with the subject matter?

Write in plain language: Avoid jargon, slang, or technical terms unless they are appropriate. Don't worry. You can do this without compromising brand voice

Don't overuse caps. Full-caps can be difficult to read and misinterpreted by screen readers.

Use camel case for multi-word hashtags. Capitalize the first letter of each word to make hashtags more legible and prevent screen reader gaffs.

Use inclusive language. Avoid ableist language, stick with gender-neutral pronouns and terms, share diverse voices and emoji, and evaluate text for assumptions of limited points of view.

Promote positive inclusion

It's a basic marketing principle that brands should create content that speaks to their audience. But too often brands over represent young, white, straight, able-bodied, cis-gender men in their imagery.

Your feed should be as diverse as the people in your audience—or the people you'd like to join your audience. Feature diversity through your visuals, partnerships, and collaborations.

The perils of social media

Reputation – one inappropriate post/comment/like/share etc. could put you in a world of bother. With the nature of social media, word spreads very quickly and something could soon go viral. Anything that gives a negative perception of you and your brand could be very damaging to your reputation – not only will it not look good for you, you'll lose vital supporters/voters which will impact your chances of being successfully elected.

Unfortunately, negative comments and hate messages are too common a feature on social media but this is a risk that comes the territory. Hopefully you won't experience this but if you do, try to think rationally rather than impulsively before replying (remember that everyone can see your account an overly aggressive or confrontational reply may make things worse). If you're unsure on how to react or would like some guidance on how best to deal with these instances, please don't be afraid to ask for support from the Voice team or pop us an email in Marketing and we'll be here to support you.

Any questions? Email marketing@su.rhul.ac.uk or drop us a message on social media (@SURHUL).

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