

Social Media Review

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The Office of the City Auditor conducted this project in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing

Social Media Review

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Social Media Review

1. Introduction

Mainstream media, which is commonly associated with newspapers and broadcast media, is the traditional method of publicizing information relating to the City of Edmonton (City). Since 2009, the City has used social media as an additional form of communication to deliver information and receive questions, comments and feedback. Social media allows Edmontonians and people around the world to access information instantaneously, converse with City employees, and connect with the City through multi-media experiences.

The Office of the City Auditor (OCA) conducted a review on the use of social media as part of its 2014 Annual Work Plan. This review included an evaluation of the current practices and guidelines around the use of social media sites currently managed by the City.

2. Background

2.1. Use of Social Media

Social media refers to internet-based tools and services that allow for participatory multi-way information sharing and dialogue. In general, the City posts information, citizens interact by commenting on the postings, and a City employee responds. This is all achieved through the use of content in the form of text, images, video, and/or audio. This type of communication tool can be used to create and strengthen relationships between citizens and the City.

Statistics Canada¹ reported that internet usage by Canadians aged 16 and over increased from 80% in 2010 to 83% in 2012. Alberta ranked second in the nation in terms of the highest proportion of internet users at 85%. In 2012, 67% used the internet as a communication tool (e.g., Facebook), up from 58% in 2010. Table 1 shows Canadians' online activities.

¹ Statistics Canada – <u>www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/131028/dq131028a-eng.htm</u>

Online Activities	Internet Users (%)
Email	93
Window shopping or browsing for information on goods or services	77
Reading or watching the news	71
Using social networking sites	67
Researching community events	58
Downloading or watching movies or video clips online	54
Downloading or watching TV online	39
Searching for employment	36
Contributing content or participating in discussion groups (e.g., blogging, posting images)	24

Table 1 – Online activities of Canadians in 2012²

2.2. City of Edmonton Social Media Sites

In terms of social media, the City primarily uses Facebook and Twitter. The City also has a presence on other social media sites, but to a lesser extent.

2.2.1. Facebook (<u>www.facebook.com/cityofedmonton</u>)

Facebook is a social media tool that enables people to connect, create, and share content (e.g., pictures/videos) and join in conversations that are relevant to their interests. The City has 12 Facebook sites. The primary City of Edmonton Facebook site is managed by Corporate Communications. The remaining 11 sites are managed by other City business units such as the Human Resources (HR) Jobs, the Reuse Centre, Muttart Conservatory, and Edmonton Transit System.

2.2.2. Twitter (<u>www.twitter.com/cityofedmonton</u>)

Twitter is a form of blogging, but limited to 140 characters with posts about information or events and can be supported by images or video and links to other web content. The City has 9 Twitter sites. The primary City of Edmonton Twitter site is managed by Corporate Communications. The remaining 8 Twitter sites are managed by other City business units such as Edmonton Transit System, Winter City Edmonton, and Edmonton Elections.

² Statistics Canada – <u>www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/131028/t131028a003-eng.htm</u>

2.2.3. Other Social Media

The City uses a variety of other forms of social media, including a Transforming Edmonton Blog, a YouTube channel, Pinterest, and LinkedIn. A brief description of each follows.

Transforming Edmonton Blog – <u>www.transformingedmonton.ca</u>

A blog is similar to an online diary or journal. A blog often combines text, images, and links to other blogs or web pages. Blogs may also allow readers to post responses to the topic of the online diary/journal. Topics included in the Transforming Edmonton site include community, economy, environment, etc.

- YouTube Channel <u>www.youtube.com/user/CityEdmonton</u> YouTube is a video-sharing site. Viewers can comment on the videos. The City currently has a variety of videos on City attractions, LRT construction, City jobs, etc.
- Pinterest <u>www.pinterest.com/cityofedmonton</u>
 Pinterest is a photo-sharing site that enables users to upload and manage pictures based on themes such as events, interests, and hobbies. It also allows other viewers to comment on the pictures.
- LinkedIn <u>www.linkedin.com/company/city-of-edmonton</u> LinkedIn is a site that enables people to connect, create, and share content. It was primarily designed to be used by people in professional occupation environments. The City uses LinkedIn to advertise job opportunities and provide webinars for potential applicants to ask a recruiter questions.

3. Objectives, Scope, & Methodology

3.1. Audit objectives

The objectives of this audit were to determine whether:

- 1. Appropriate metrics are used to measure the success of City social media sites.
- 2. City social media sites are being used in an effective and efficient manner.
- 3. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place to guide the use of City social media sites for business purposes.

3.2. Scope and methodology

The scope of this audit included a review of the use of social media sites created by City business units for business purposes. Administrative Directives such as the *Employee Code of Conduct* (A1100C) and *Acceptable Use of Communication Technology* (A1429C) provide general guidance for employees' use of the City's social media sites. We reviewed the current listing of City social media sites as of April 2014 and the policies and procedures that were in place at the time. This review did not include

personal social media sites created by City employees or sites managed by organizations not reporting to the City Manager.

In order to achieve our objectives, we performed the following work:

- Assessed the current documentation guiding the use of social media.
- Conducted interviews with the Department stakeholders who manage the City's social media sites.
- Reviewed statistics and postings on City social media sites.
- Researched policies and practices of other government organizations.

4. **Observations**

4.1. Social Media Sites

In April 2014, the City listed 35 social media sites on its webpage, with 30 sites managed by the Administration. The remaining 5 sites were out-of-scope³ for this review. We assessed 12 Facebook and 9 Twitter sites in this review. The City also uses 9 other social media sites including a Transforming Edmonton Blog, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and YouTube that we did not assess.

Facebook

The City's Facebook site is public, thus any individual can view the site. This site is used primarily for two-way conversations with Edmontonians and as a source for publicizing City information (e.g., information on LRT expansion and property assessments).

In addition to viewing a site, an individual can give positive feedback by "Liking" the site. A "Like" on Facebook is a measure of popularity and means that the person has signed up to see updates on their own news feed without needing to navigate to the City's Facebook site. Individuals must have a personal Facebook account in order to make comments on the site. The City's Facebook site currently has approximately 16,100 "Likes."

The City of Edmonton Jobs Facebook site is used as a recruitment tool by the Human Resources Branch. This site has won two international awards for its strategy, presentation, and approach (Standard of Excellence Award from the New Media Institute of New York and the Thomas H. Muehlenbeck Award for Excellence in Local Government). The site offers free webinars to job seekers and hosts an interactive weekly '*Ask a Recruiter Session.*' The page has over 48,600 "Likes" and has been a contributing factor in the recruitment of 26 employees to City positions between January 2013 and November 2013.

³ Out of scope includes Edmonton Public Library (2 sites), Edmonton Economic Development Corporation, and Edmonton Police Services (2 sites).

Twitter

Twitter is used for sharing immediate information, such as ETS service disruptions or road closures. Messages are in the form of 140-character "tweets." It is also a microblogging site that enables two-way conversations with Edmontonians.

The City's Twitter site is public, thus any individual can view the site. Any passive viewer can see the messages posted by the City by visiting the site. An active Twitter user can subscribe and "Follow" the City's account to have messages appear automatically in their Twitter stream. "Followers" also have the option of "re-tweeting" the messages to all of their "Followers," resulting in the messages reaching a wider audience.

Graph 1 illustrates the growing popularity of the City's main social media sites.



Graph 1 – Popularity of the City's Main Facebook and Twitter Sites

The City of Edmonton's main Twitter site has grown from 16,000 followers in 2011 to over 61,500 followers as at April 2014. Similarly the number of Facebook likes has grown from 5,800 in 2011 to 16,100 as at April 2014.

Graph 2 shows the number of "Likes" for the various Facebook accounts maintained by City business units.



Popularity of City Sites

There is a wide variation in the number of "Likes" for the City's 12 Facebook sites. The City of Edmonton's Jobs site has over 48,600 "Likes," which is three times as many as the City of Edmonton's main site. On the other end of the scale, there are 6 sites with fewer than 1,000 "Likes" (ranging from 79 to 939).

Similarly, Graph 3 on the following page shows the number of "Followers" for the various Twitter accounts maintained by City business units.



Graph 3 – Number of "Followers" per City Twitter Site (April 2014)

The City of Edmonton's main Twitter site has over 61,500 "Followers," which is significantly more than the next most popular City Twitter site, which has 3,200 "Followers." There were also 4 sites with less than 1,000 "Followers" (ranging from 486 to 866).

Graphs 2 and 3 show that some City social media sites are much more popular than others. For example, the City of Edmonton Jobs Facebook site and 3 other Facebook sites have over 10,000 "Likes." For Twitter, the City's main site has many more "Followers" than any other site.

Popularity by itself indicates increased awareness and interest in City services. We believe that popularity metrics (Likes and Followers) are useful quantitative indicators that can be easily communicated to management to measure relative successes of social media sites and efficiency of the communications. However, they are not sufficient to determine whether resources supporting social media sites are used effectively.

4.2. Assessment of Effectiveness

During public consultations in developing the City's strategic plans, Edmontonians expressed a desire to learn more about City programs and services through different forms of communication. In 2009, the City measured citizen satisfaction and drivers of satisfaction. The satisfaction ratings for what services the City provided were relatively high (average 80%), while citizens surveyed reported much lower satisfaction with how

the City delivered services (average 48%). The research uncovered key drivers of satisfaction that were missing: perception that the City was listening and responding to citizens, the City is transparent about activities, and the City is communicating complex issues. As part of the strategy to address those issues, the City adopted social media as an additional means of connecting with Edmontonians.

Social media is a communication tool that can be used to create and strengthen relationships between organizations and their clients. In order to measure the degree to which the City's use of social media has been successful, measuring the numbers of "Likes" and "Followers" is not enough. More meaningful measures will focus on the degree to which social media advances the City's goals of relating to its citizens in more meaningful ways. Examples of more meaningful measures of the effectiveness of social media outreaches could consider the kinds of responses and feedback received on the postings (e.g., positive shares, re-tweets, and thank-you messages). The City is not currently using these kinds of metrics in all programs.

We believe that as the use of social media continues to evolve, the City needs to further develop meaningful measures to assess effectiveness and demonstrate the value of social media.

Recommendation 1 – Assessment of Effectiveness

The Office of the City Auditor recommends that Corporate Communications work with Departments to develop measures that assess the effectiveness of using social media to meet program objectives.

Management Comments Accepted

Action Plan:

Corporate Communications will lead the development of an inventory of measures for business units to consider when creating a new social media channel. Corporate Communications will work with business units to identify measurable objectives that evaluate the success of achieving specific project or program outcomes for each campaign, based on the communications objectives of increasing awareness, changing perception or influencing behaviour, as well as overall measures of reputation.

Responsible Party:

Chief Communications Officer, Corporate Communications

Planned Implementation Date:

October 2014

4.3. Management of Social Media Sites

Social media sites that represent the City, but are not actively monitored and managed, present a reputational risk to the City. City processes need to be improved so that social media sites are kept up-to-date and do not contain inaccurate or inappropriate information.

Table 2 shows the number of Facebook and Twitter sites managed by City Departments.

City Department	Number of Facebook Sites	Number of Twitter Sites
Office of the City Manager - Corporate Communications	2	4
Community Services	7	1
Corporate Services	1	2
Transportation Services	1	1
Financial Services and Utilities	1	0
Sustainable Development	0	1
Total	12	9

 Table 2 – Facebook and Twitter Sites by Department

4.3.1. Resources Managing Social Media Sites

Corporate Communications has over 30 staff members who provide varying amounts of social media services for the City. This includes Corporate Communications staff in the Media Relations Unit as well as staff who are assigned to Departments. The majority of Corporate Communications staff spent less than five percent of their daily job function on social media work. The one staff member whose primary duty is to monitor the City's main Facebook and Twitter sites spends about 50% of a typical workday on social media. Therefore, we estimate that Corporate Communications staff time is equivalent to 2 Full Time Equivalents (FTE).

Through our discussions with Department representatives, we estimate that the Departments use 2.5 Full Time Equivalents (FTE) to manage the social media sites listed in Table 2. Similar to Corporate Communications, staff time allocated to social media varies.

In total, the City currently uses approximately 4.5 FTEs to manage the 21 social media sites in Table 2.

4.3.2. Corporate Standards for Creating a Social Media Site

Currently, there are no formal procedures in place to monitor or approve the creation of a social media site by City business units.

Documents on the City's intranet, however, provide social media guidance that indicates that the responsible business unit should work with Corporate Communications and the

Web Office before creating a social media site. In our discussions with the Web Office and Corporate Communications, they agreed it is a communication tool. Therefore, Corporate Communications should oversee the City's use of social media.

We found examples of City business units that had limited communication with Corporate Communications before they created social media sites. In one instance, we found that Corporate Communications had no involvement before a City social media site was created. That site was not listed in the City's listing of social media sites.

If Corporate Communications is not aware of all the channels of communications that exist, it is unable to ensure that the overall image, brand, and reputation of the City are protected. In addition, if the City publishes an incomplete listing of official City social media sites, citizens may not know which sites can be trusted as official City of Edmonton social media sites.

Having a complete listing of official City social media sites would help ensure consistency in the City's branding and would also provide citizens with a single source of links to the City's social media sites (see Recommendation 2).

4.3.3. Updating of Social Media Sites

Departments that create social media sites are responsible for their ongoing management. Management of social media sites includes monitoring activities, responding to queries or comments, and providing regular postings. In addition to the Department's role in managing social media sites, Corporate Communications also has a role in monitoring City sites in order to protect the reputation of the City.

Guidance provided by current City documentation suggests that business units should use social media only when they have the time and resources to update the social media site at least a couple of times per week and monitor comments daily. We reviewed the listing of City Facebook and Twitter accounts (see Table 3) to determine whether the City has been updating its social media sites in a reasonable amount of time.

Social Media Sites	Facebook Sites	Twitter Sites
Continuous updates (daily)	5	4
Occasional updates (2X per week)	6	3
Inactive (not updated in 2 months or more)	1	2
Total	12	9

Table 3 – Activity Rate of Social Media Sites (April 2014)

As shown in Table 3, 9 of the 21 City social media sites are updated on a continuous basis. The three inactive social media sites had no postings for more than 2 months. However, those 3 social media sites (Oliver Outdoor Pool site on Facebook and the Twitter sites for the Edmonton Elections and Edmonton Arena Info) are active only during limited times and are not expected to be updated regularly.

Without regular site updates, however, citizens may lose interest in the page, information may no longer be relevant, appear stale, or inappropriate items may have been posted and not addressed. This could lead to a reputational risk if the City does not maintain the sites in a timely manner. In general, the City appears to be updating social media sites in a reasonable manner.

4.3.4. Controls for Managing Social Media Sites

In our review of City social media sites we observed several control issues over administrative access. Administrative access enables an employee to post content and comments as a representative of the City.

Currently, a mix of City and personal email accounts are being used to create and login to City social media accounts. We also observed that several individuals may share a single login ID and password for an account. Additionally, the monitoring and update access rights to specific sites may be granted to an individual, a group of individuals, or a contractor. These weaknesses create a risk in that the City may not be able to identify the specific employee who either responded to a comment or posted the information. Additionally, these inconsistencies in account management and "ownership" may also create problems when an employee leaves the organization.

We believe that improved controls are needed to add accountability in managing City social media sites and that these controls would be best communicated through social media training.

4.3.5. Social Media Training

Administrative Directive A1446, *Media Relations Management* guides Departments in their communications with the media. The Directive defines 'media' as any representative of a newspaper, radio station, television station, or internet news gathering agency.

The Administrative Procedure states that any employee who may directly interact with media must receive basic media training. Basic media training is provided by Corporate Communications through a full-day workshop, which includes tips and guidelines on giving effective media interviews. However, social media has not been specifically identified in the Directive even though its primary use is to communicate directly with the general public.

Corporate Communications is responsible for managing the overall image, brand, and reputation of the City, but does not offer mandatory formal social media training to staff. Corporate Communications does have some internal documents to guide the business use of social media, but they are only circulated to Corporate Communications staff and project managers who have sought advice from Corporate Communications. Corporate Communications has offered basic "*Social Media 101*" sessions to employees as a way to increase knowledge about social media tools, personal responsibilities under the Code of Conduct, and opportunities for business uses but participation is not mandatory.

Without mandatory social media training, employees with administrative access to a City social media site might not be adequately trained to post information or respond to questions from the public. This increases the risk that legislation, such as the Freedom of Information & Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act, or the City's Code of Conduct, may not be complied with. This could result in confidential and/or personal information being posted inappropriately. Employees with social media site responsibilities should receive training similar to that which is available for existing media relations training. (Recommendation 2)

Recommendation 2 – Use of Social Media

The Office of the City Auditor recommends that Corporate Communications work with the Departments to ensure that all social media sites are being managed effectively. This includes:

- Ensure that a process is in place to identify all City-owned social media sites.
- Ensure that all employees who manage social media sites on behalf of the City have received appropriate mandatory social media training.

Management Comments

Accepted

Action Plan:

Corporate Communications will lead the development of a training workplan and support resources based on a new Administrative Directive and Handbook, and implement training for staff using accounts and new accounts.

Responsible Party:

Chief Communications Officer, Corporate Communications

Planned Implementation Date:

Administrative Directive and Handbook – November 2014 Training workplan and education materials – By end of 2014 Begin training sessions – January/February 2015

4.4. Policy and Governance

Social media is a communication tool for which the City needs to define roles and responsibilities. There are currently no City policies that address the governance of social media, even though its use is growing. The Corporate Communications Branch is responsible for managing the City's communications and is best positioned to manage social media activity.

4.4.1. Current Governance Structure

In October 2013, the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) approved the creation of a Social Media Governance Committee. Corporate Communications has taken the leading role and is working with various City Departments and Committees to form this Governance Committee and draft a Terms of Reference.

In December 2013, the City created a new overall governance structure for information management. The Information Management Committee's (IMC) mandate is to ensure corporate oversight of information management. Three of its key responsibilities are to:

- 1. Make decisions on corporate-wide directives, policies, and procedures related to information management.
- 2. Direct, steer, and prioritize information management activities.
- 3. Review performance of existing information management related portfolios.

Once formed, the Social Media Governance Committee will coordinate with the IMC to implement a formalized governance structure for social media use within the City.

4.4.2. Guidance Documents

City Policy C420, *Corporate Communications*, was created to "protect and enhance the City of Edmonton's image as a well-managed city and a desirable place to live and work through effective communication of its programs and services, undertaken in a professional, cost-effective manner." The Policy also states that Corporate Communications Branch is to advise and assist senior management and departmental communications staff in areas related to media relations, public relations, creative production, advertising, marketing, special events and protocol. This Policy was last updated in 1991, well before social media was well-developed. Therefore, Corporate Communications' role relative to the City's use of social media is not defined.

There are three City Directives with associated procedures that are available to all City employees and provide limited guidance on the use of social media. These include:

- Media Relations Management (A1446)
- Acceptable Use of Communication Technology (A1429C)
- Employee Code of Conduct (A1100C)

Additionally, Corporate Communications, through the City's website, has made available to City staff the following guidelines:

- Social Media Strategy Guide
- Guidelines for Contests on Facebook

- Social Media Response Protocol for Communications
- Social Media Comments and Moderation
- Twitter Guidelines
- Terms of Engagement for Facebook
- Social Media Guidelines
- Using Social Media (intranet)

Although Corporate Communications manages these guidelines, they have no authority to ensure compliance. We believe that the City needs to update current policies to assign the oversight role for social media. This would include defining the roles and responsibilities of the Web Office, Corporate Communications, and the Office of Public Engagement in relation to social media and updating the current guiding documents (see Recommendation 3).

4.4.3. Benchmarking to Other Social Media Guidelines

We also reviewed the City's guiding documents that address various aspects of using social media to assess their coverage of key policy themes. We reviewed comparable documents from other Government organizations including the City of Toronto's⁴ social media use guidelines and the Government of Alberta's *Social Media – Web 2.0 Policy*. In combination, the City's guiding documents cover each of the key themes. However, that guidance is spread over multiple documents, making it difficult for a user to find all the related guidance. There is a risk that an employee assigned to maintain a business unit's social media site may not be aware of all applicable guidelines.

The City needs to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of managing social media consistently across all City business units by combining all policy themes into a single document (see Recommendation 3).

⁴ Guidelines for Social Media Use by Employees and the Application of City Policies for Social Media Use

Recommendation 3 – Governance Structure

The OCA recommends that the City update policies relating to social media. This should include:

- Create a governance structure to oversee strategy and governance of social media channels for the organization.
- Update City Policies and Administrative Directives as necessary to ensure clear definition of the authorities, roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities for the business use of social media.
- Develop a single comprehensive guideline for using social media.

Management Comments

Accepted

Action Plan:

A new Administrative Directive for the City organization will be created on the use of Social Media and the Communications Policy will be updated to include responsibilities for this area. A Handbook of all procedures, based on the overarching principles in the Administrative Directive, will be created to consolidate and align existing guiding documentation.

Responsible Party:

Chief Communications Officer, Corporate Communications

Planned Implementation Date:

Administrative Directive – by end of 2014 Handbook – January 2015 Updated Communications Policy – by end of 2015

5. Conclusion

Social media is a communication tool used to create and strengthen relationships between people and/or organizations. Through this audit, we have shown that the City of Edmonton is expanding its use of social media. Consequently, the City must consider reputational risks related to social media and also ensure that value for money is achieved for the resources assigned to managing social media sites.

Our objectives were to determine whether:

- Appropriate metrics are used to measure the success of City social media sites,
- City social media sites are being used in an effective and efficient manner, and
- Appropriate policies and procedures are in place to guide the use of City social media sites for business purposes.

We observed that the City is measuring the popularity of social media sites, which is one metric for evaluating the value of social media sites. However, we also believe the City needs to further demonstrate the value of social media and have recommended

that they develop additional relational metrics that link social media use to program goals.

We observed that social media management within the City can be improved to provide more consistency, which will reduce reputational risk to the City. We have recommended improved oversight for the creation of social media sites. We also recommended that all employees who manage social media sites on behalf of the City receive appropriate mandatory training to ensure that the City's social media sites are managed consistently.

We observed that the City is currently in the process of formalizing a governance structure for the use of social media. Additionally, the City's current policies do not fully address the governance of social media. We have recommended that a governance structure be formalized and the policies be updated to define corporate roles relating to the management and oversight of social media.

We thank the management and staff of the City's Corporate Communications and Corporate Services' Department for their cooperation and assistance during this audit.