



Social Media for Water Utilities

NACWA Strategic Communication: H₂O

Water Research Foundation Project #4638

July 27, 2017

advancing the science of water

Slide 1

1 Alice starts here
Laura Ganus, 6/15/2017

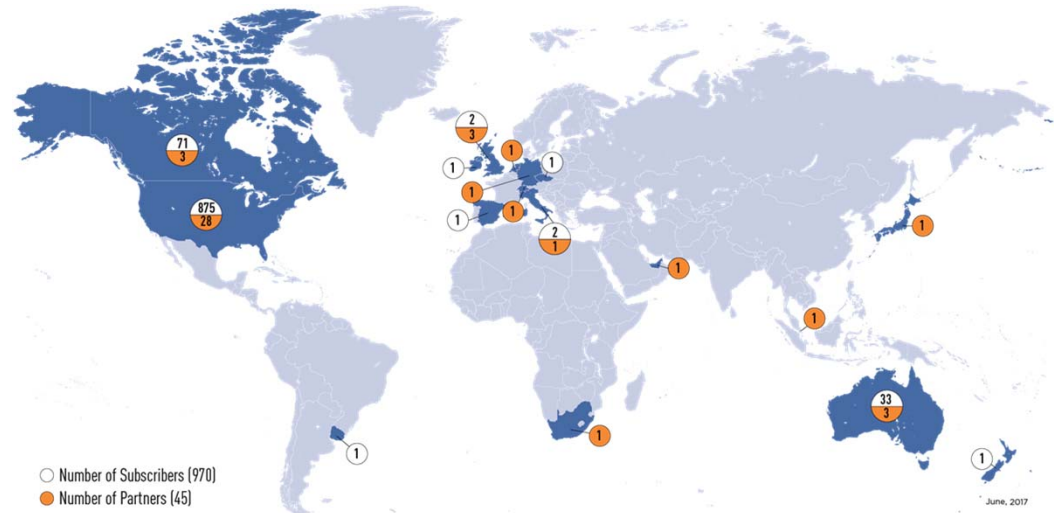
1 Look for opportunitites to highlight crisis communications
Eric Eckl, 7/14/2017

Outline

- Background
- Introductions
- Research Deliverables
- Top Takeaways and Recommendations
- Q & A

Water Research Foundation

- WRF (formerly AwwaRF)
- Member-supported, non-profit research collaborative
- >950 subscribers U.S. and abroad
- Mission - to advance the science of drinking water
 - research and collaboration
- Funded and managed >1,000 research studies valued at >\$500 million since 1966



Background

- Benefits of social media appear substantial, but difficult to quantify
- Can introduce new challenges, unintended consequences, and costs
- Evolving rapidly; challenging to keep up

Project Goal: identify costs, opportunities, barriers, strategies, and tools for effective engagement in social media:

1. make the *business case* for digital engagement and
2. determine how to fit digital engagement in communication strategy





Alice Fulmer
Senior Research Manager,
a.k.a “The Boss”



Laura Ganus
Project Manager
a.k.a “The Cat Herder”



Eric Eckl
Principal Investigator
a.k.a “The Scapegoat”

Slide 5

2

update with all three speakers

Eric Eckl, 6/15/2017

Research Deliverable #1: Customer Survey

We surveyed 400
Facebook users about
their relationship with
their water utility.



Slide 6

3

Laura does these

Eric Eckl, 6/15/2017

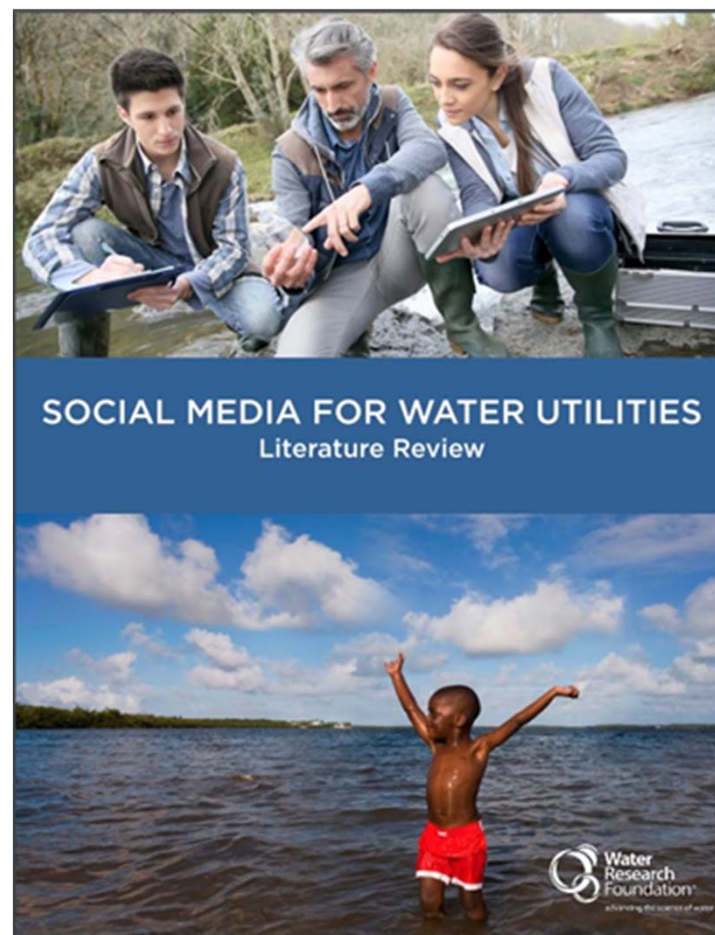
Research Deliverable #2: Benchmarking

We examined the social media practices of 60 water, wastewater, and stormwater utilities from all across the country.



Research Deliverable #3: Literature Review

We prepared a 65-page literature review with over 90 citations from peer reviewed, grey, and popular literature



Slide 8

2

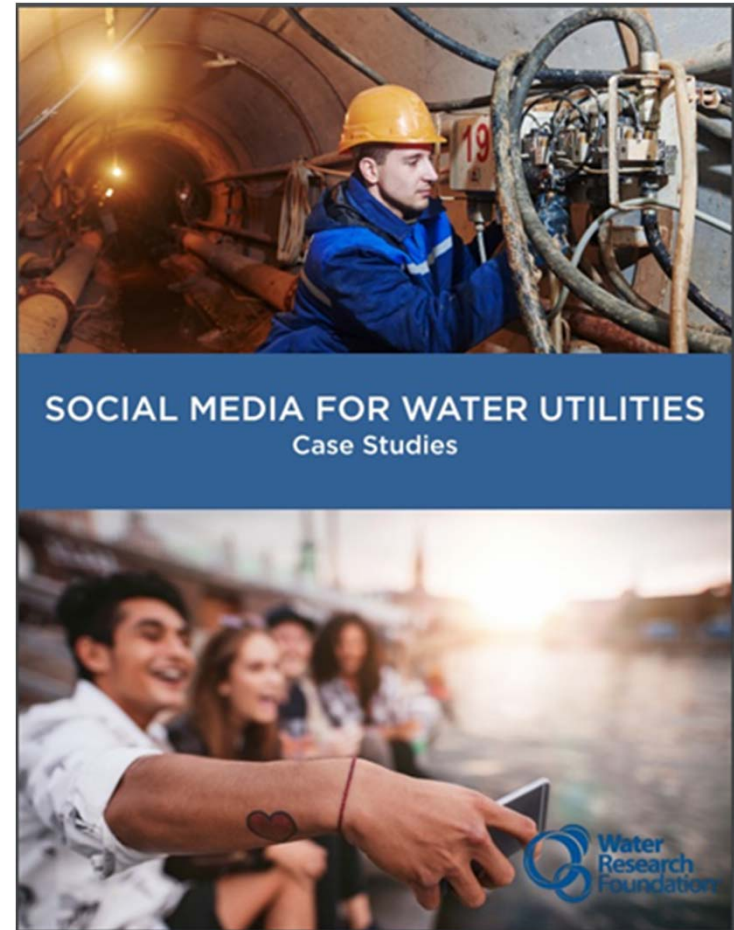
+laura.ganus@waterwordsthatwork.com fix image

Assigned to you

Laura Ganus, 7/11/2017

Research Deliverable # 4: Case Studies

We prepared eight case studies to document how utilities are integrating social media into their operations



Slide 9

3

+laura.ganus@waterwordsthatwork.com fix

Assigned to you

Laura Ganus, 7/11/2017

Research Deliverable # 5: Executive Briefing

We synthesized and interpreted all other findings, and made recommendations for utilities that are just getting started

(Publicly available)



Project Deliverables #6 & 7:



Social Media Posting Skills Checklist

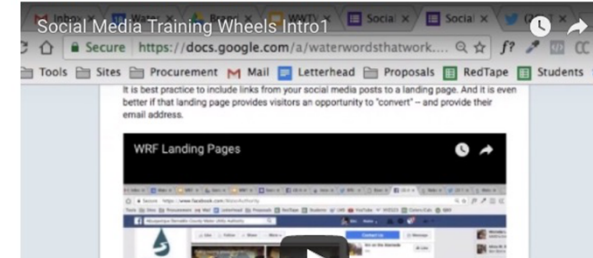
The "Training Wheels" is a tool for staff at clean water organizations who want to prepare top quality content for their organizational social media accounts. This tool is funded by the Water Research Foundation, and was developed by Water Words That Work, LLC.

The range of scores is between 0 and 60. You earn points by applying best practices to your Facebook posts and tweets.

With lower scores, your post or tweet will not travel far from your own account. With higher scores, Facebook and Twitter are more likely to pass your post or tweet along to your connections, and your post or tweet is more likely to turn up in search results, as well.

THIS IS A WORKING MOCKUP OF THE SERVICE FOR REVIEW BY WRF AND ITS PROJECT ADVISORS. THIS IS NOT THE FINAL APPLICATION.

How to use the Posting Skills Checklist



Our Top Takeaways

1. A handful of utilities are demonstrating the potential of social media for the industry
2. However, only a small minority of utilities are using social media at all
3. Even water utilities that do use social media are only connecting with a fraction of the population they serve
4. Most utilities aren't giving customers what they want on social media
5. With a few exceptions, utilities aren't taking advantage of social media to make the case for rate increases

4

Eric starts here

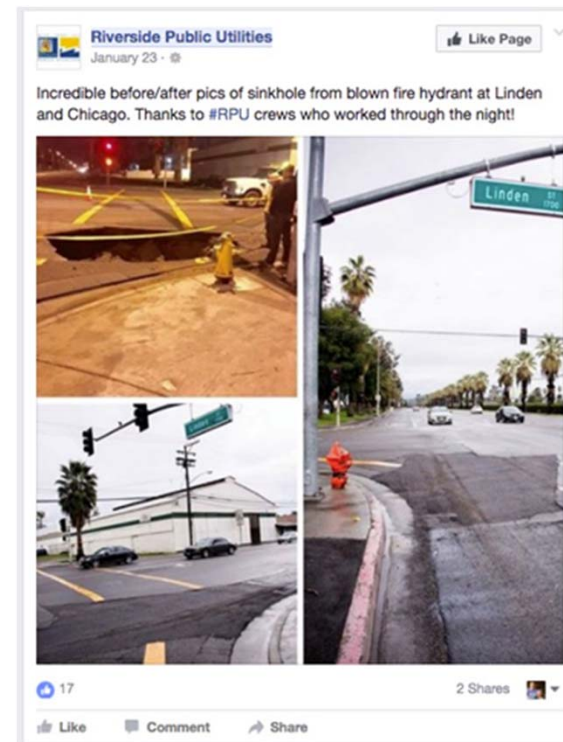
Laura Ganus, 6/15/2017

Our Top Recommendations

1. Utilities that are not currently using social media should take another look
2. Utilities should think through their goals and develop some policies and guidelines before they launch their official profiles
3. Utilities should expect to commit between 10 and 80 hours of staff time per week, and also budget for useful tools and related expenses
4. Utilities should make a conscious effort to share content that is interesting and “socialize” their information
5. Utilities should reconsider their objections to paid advertising, especially during crisis situations

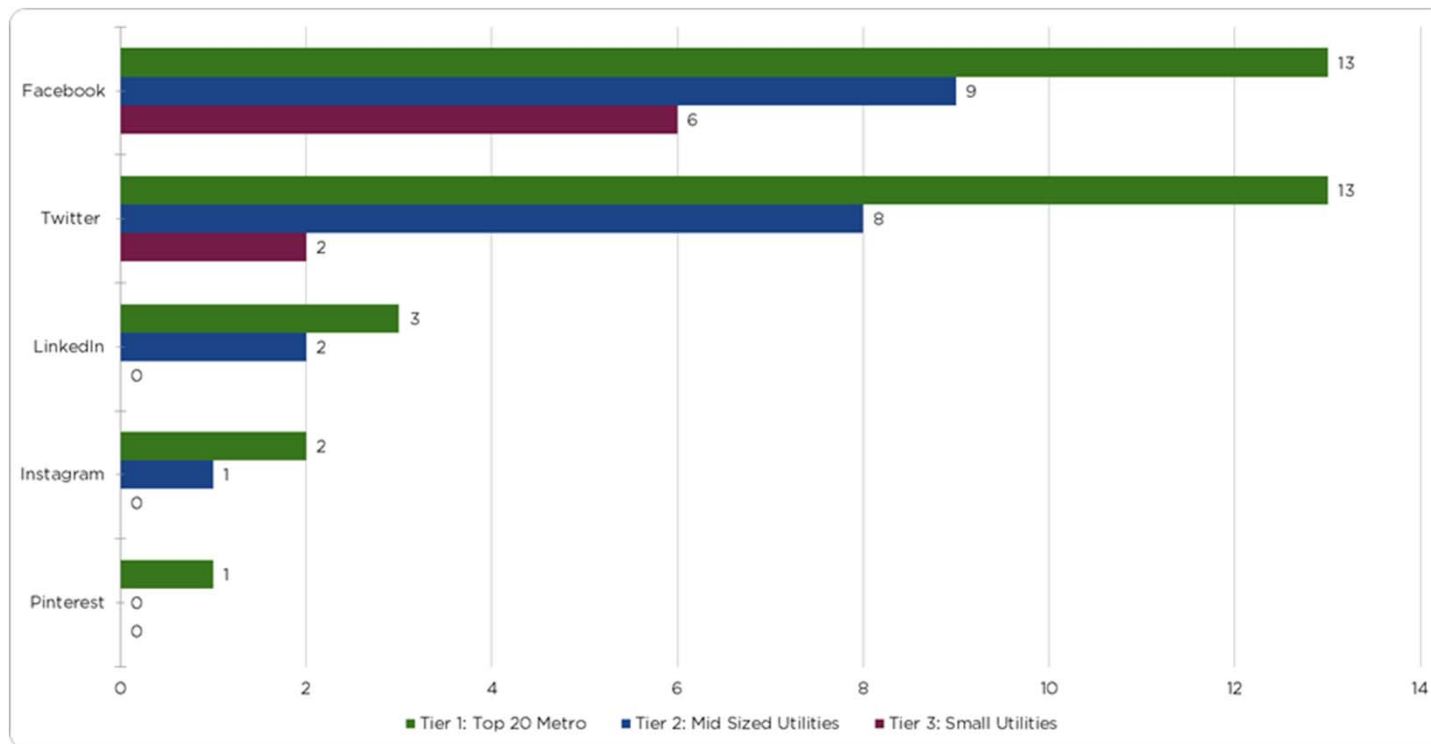
Top Takeaway #1:

A handful of utilities are demonstrating the potential of social media for the industry



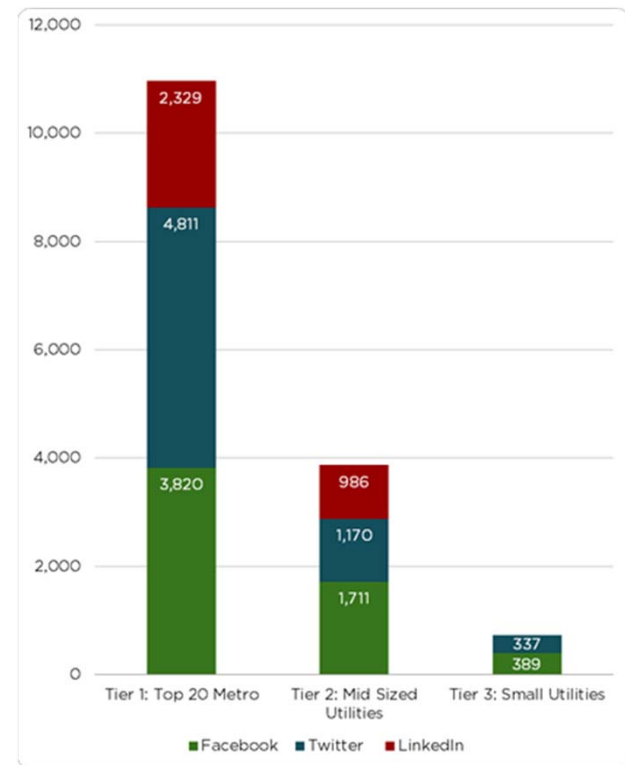
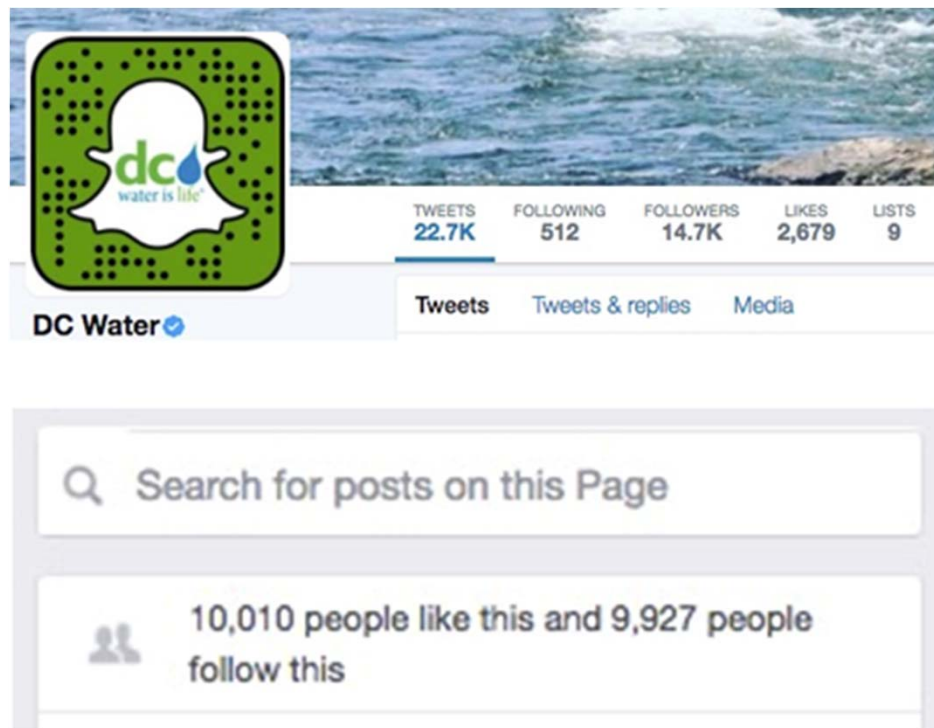
Top Takeaway #2:

However, only a small minority of utilities are using social media at all



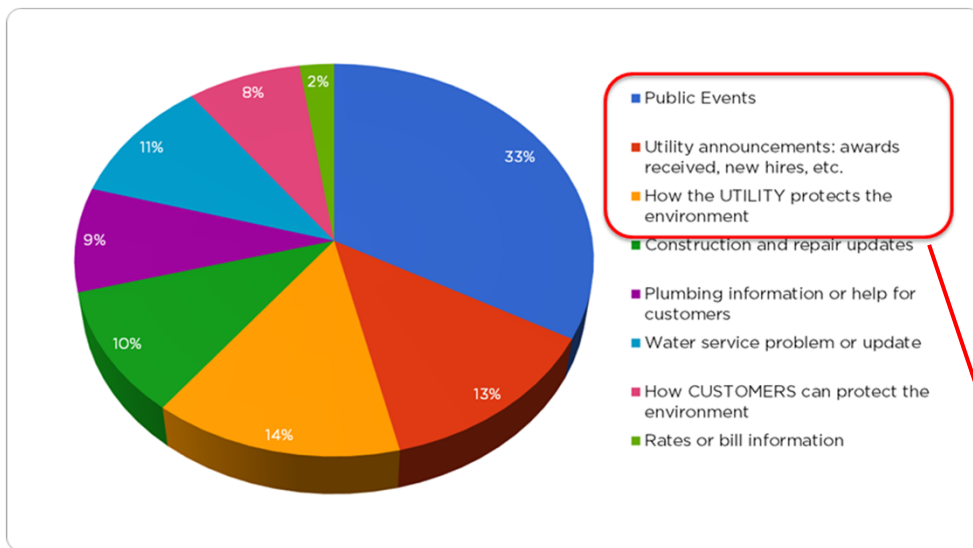
Top Takeaway #3:

Even water utilities that do use social media are only connecting with a fraction of the population they serve



Top Takeaway #4:

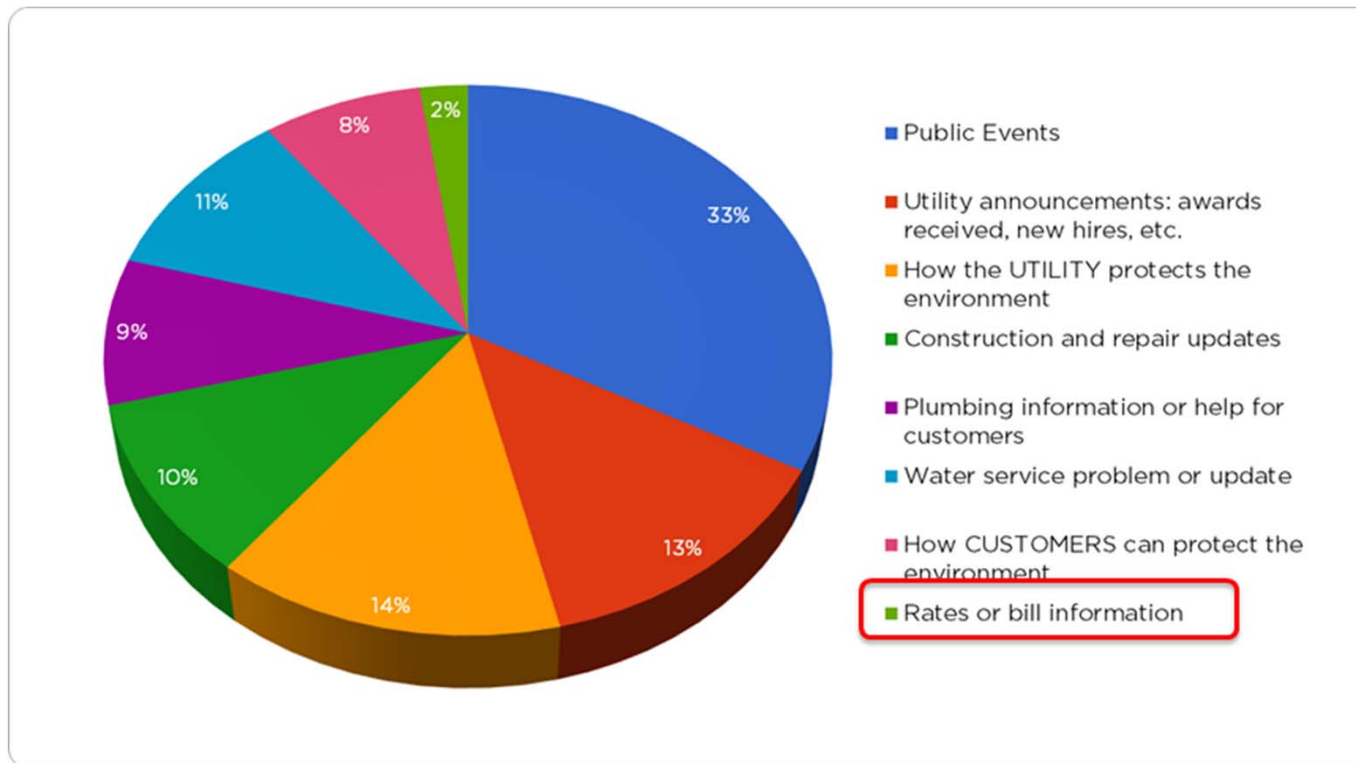
Most utilities aren't giving customers what they want on social media



Answer	Average Score (On a 7 point scale. Higher scores = more interest)
Updates on service disruptions and outages	3.1
Updates on water and sewer line construction and repairs in your neighborhood	2.8
Water conservation and pollution prevention tips, offers, and incentives	2.6
Tips for preventing clogged pipes and sewage backups in your home	2.6
Updates on your water utility's environmental accomplishments	2.4
Water utility public events, such as festivals and volunteer activities	2.3
Utility announcements: awards received, new hires, etc.	2.0

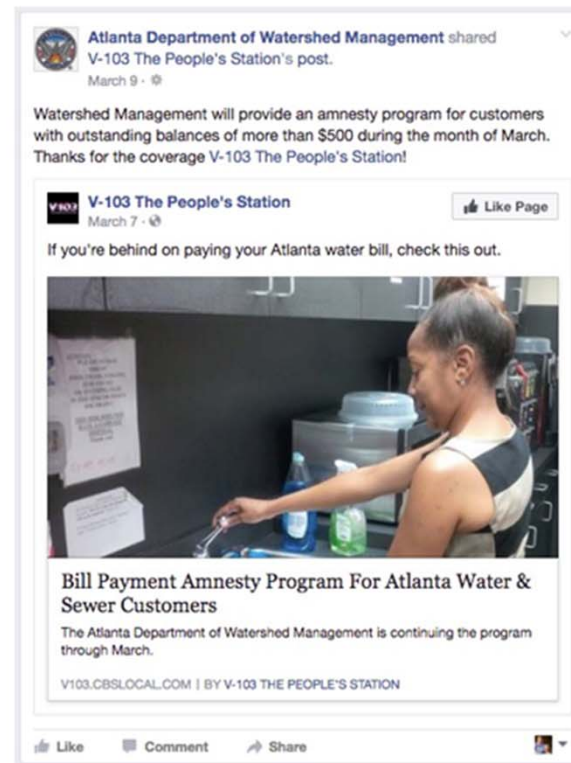
Top Takeaway #5:

With a few exceptions, utilities aren't taking advantage of social media to make the case for rate increases



Top Takeaway #5:

With a few exceptions, utilities aren't taking advantage of social media to make the case for rate increases



Top Recommendation #1:

Utilities that are not currently using social media should take another look

79% of online adults (68% of all Americans) use Facebook

% of online adults who use Facebook

All online adults	79%
Men	75
Women	83
18-29	88
30-49	84
50-64	72
65+	62
High school degree or less	77
Some college	82
College+	79
Less than \$30K/year	84
\$30K-\$49,999	80
\$50K-\$74,999	75
\$75,000+	77
Urban	81
Suburban	77
Rural	81

18-29	88
30-49	84
50-64	72
65+	62

Urban	81
Suburban	77
Rural	81

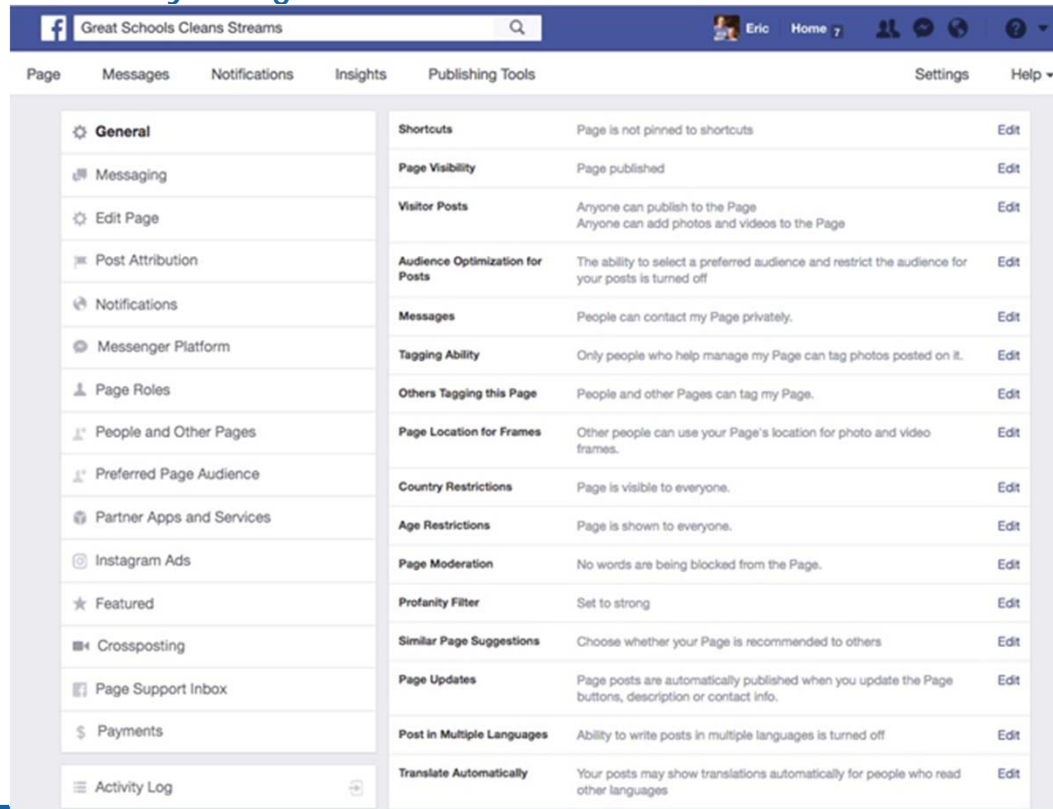
Note: Race/ethnicity breaks not shown due to sample size.
Source: Survey conducted March 7-April 4, 2016.
"Social Media Update 2016"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

PewResearchCenter

Top Recommendation #1:

Utilities that are not currently using social media should take another look



Facebook and Twitter provide tools to manage "trolls"

Top Recommendation #2:

Utilities should think through their goals and develop some policies and guidelines before they launch their official profiles

Institution	% Reporting They Have a Formal Social Media Policy	Source
240 individuals from the banking, insurance, manufacturing, and consulting industries	66%	Continuity Insights 2014
155 cities	19%	Bennett and Manoharan 2016

https://abm-website-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/continuityinsights.com/s3fs-public/legacyimages/CIN419_CrisisCommReportFinal.pdf

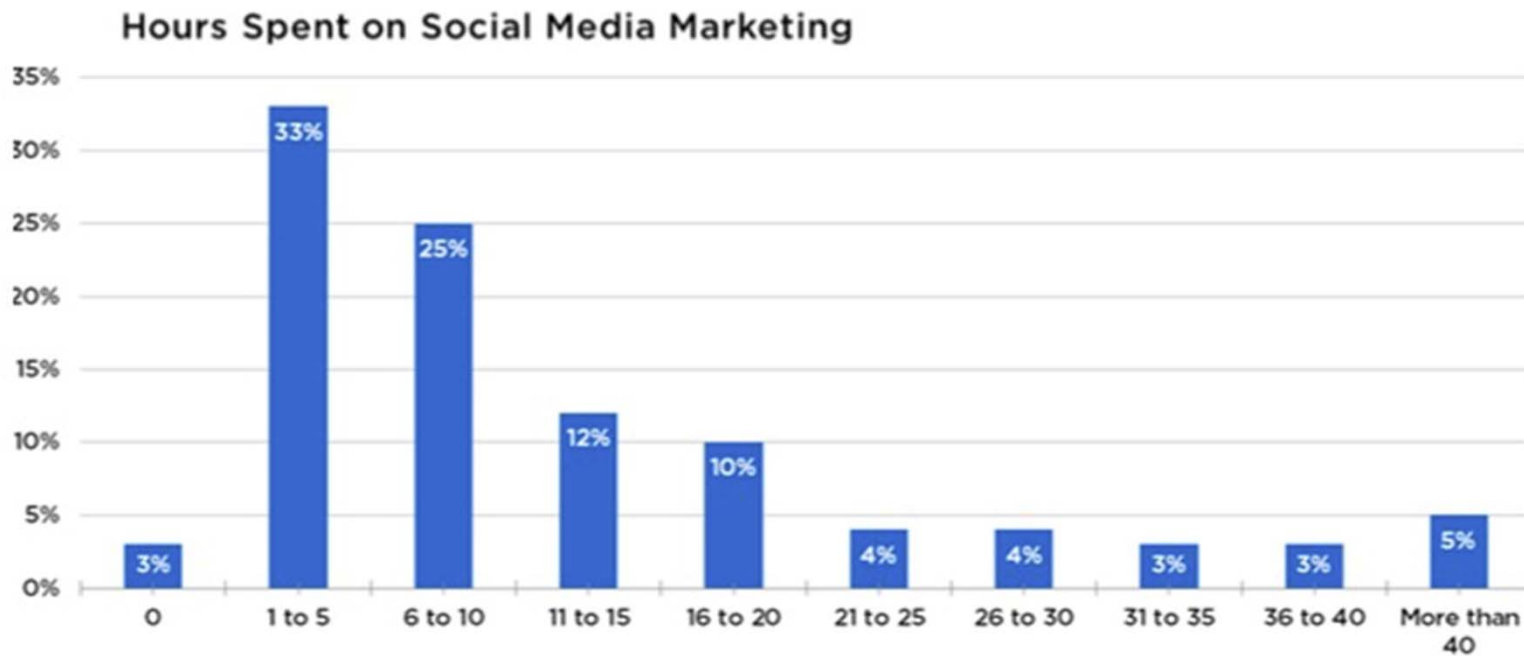
5

replace image with higher resolution

Laura Ganus, 7/11/2017

Top Recommendation #3:

Utilities should expect to commit between 10 and 80 hours of staff time per week, and also budget for useful tools and related expenses



Source: Stelzner 2015

Top Recommendation #3:

Utilities should expect to commit between 10 and 80 hours of staff time per week, and also budget for useful tools and related expenses

- A sample social media weekly/monthly/quarterly/annual work plan can be found in the Executive Briefing
- Examples of how other utilities have structured, staffed, and budgeted their social media operations can be found in the Case Studies Report

Water Research Foundation 30

Interval	Tasks	Time Commitment
At the Outset	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set goals for what the utility will attempt to accomplish on social media • Develop employee policies and public use policies • Update or create a crisis communication plan to include social media • Set up social media accounts and carefully adjust settings • Promote social media accounts on website, email newsletter, and elsewhere • Connect to local elected officials, board members, journalists, and other community leaders • Research popular community hashtags and relevant groups • Set up social media monitoring and Google Alerts 	30-50 hours
Daily	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review overnight events to determine if there were any service interruptions, water main breaks, or other events that require follow up • Review the day's field work orders to anticipate likely areas of construction or traffic interruption • Respond to incoming social media messages, or refer them to customer service • Scan for mentions of the utility across the Internet • Identify suitable content from others to like 	1 to 2 hours per day, per social media account
Weekly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post 3-6 times on Twitter • Post 1-2 times on Facebook • Create one long-form blog post (200+ words) • Monitor social media attention to partners and other community institutions • Review analytics of the utility's Facebook and Twitter accounts • Review results with direct supervisors 	2 to 3 hours per week, per social media account
Quarterly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review progress towards goals, adjust goals if necessary • Present update to senior management/board of directors • Review upcoming quarter's event calendar and potential crisis situations (flood, blizzard, etc.) 	5-10 hours
Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review progress towards goals in the past year • Set goals for the coming year • Review staffing arrangements and adjust if necessary • Review utility policies and guidelines, recommend adjustments if necessary 	5-10 hours

4

DElete


Eric Eckl, 7/14/2017

Top Recommendation #4:

Utilities should make a conscious effort to share content that is interesting and “socialize” their information

WSSC Water
January 27 · 🌐

CUSTOMERS: We are experiencing intermittent outages with online payment system. Issue should be resolved w/in the hour. Thank you for your patience.



Like Comment Share

Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District shared American Rivers's post.

ENVIRONMENT: How and where streams flow is a critical part of our Regional Stormwater Management Program. This map takes an even higher bird's-eye view to show the flow.

American Rivers
January 20 · 🌐

If you doubted rivers are the arteries of our country, check out this cool image of US river basins.



The veins of America: Stunning map shows every river basin in the US

A stunning new map from Imgur user Fejletlenfej shows the complex network of rivers and streams in the contiguous United States, highlighting the...
DAILYMAIL.CO.UK

28


Like Comment Share

Top Recommendation #4:

Utilities should make a conscious effort to share content that is interesting and “socialize” their information

Riverside Public Utilities
December 19, 2016 · 🌐 Like Page

Traveling? Follow weather alerts in up to 5 locations using the @fema app. Learn more: <https://youtu.be/DtF18YHjG-> #WinterSafety #BeSafe #RPU




1 Like 1 Comment

Like Comment Share

Los Angeles Department of Water & Power
October 5, 2016 · 🌐 Like Page

Know an engineering student at [UC San Diego](#) or [Loyola Marymount University](#)? Let them know we will be at the Science and Technology Career Fair today at UC San Diego and the Fall Career Expo at LMU on Wednesday. We have a critical need for engineers. Learn more at: <http://p.ctx.ly/r/2qmc> #BePartofSomethingBig



Be Part of Something Big!
VIMEO.COM | BY LADWP

8 Likes

Like Comment Share


Top Recommendation #5:

Utilities should reconsider their objections to paid advertising, especially during crisis situations

Impeller
March 13 · 🌐

Like Page

Sensus VP Colin Walsby explains how Xylem and Sensus technology will help customers make smarter decisions.



The future of the digital water utility - Impeller
New technology and huge amounts of data are changing how water utilities operate. Find out how utilities are adapting and what opportunities lie ahead.

IMPELLER.XYLEMINC.COM

Learn More

43

1 Comment 3 Shares

Like Comment Share

Followed by Conor Friedersdorf.

SeaWorld @SeaWorld · 15m

Blackfish is propaganda. Learn the truth about our killer whale care at bit.ly/1hju3Ku pic.twitter.com/nxBrx12Cz

Promoted by SeaWorld



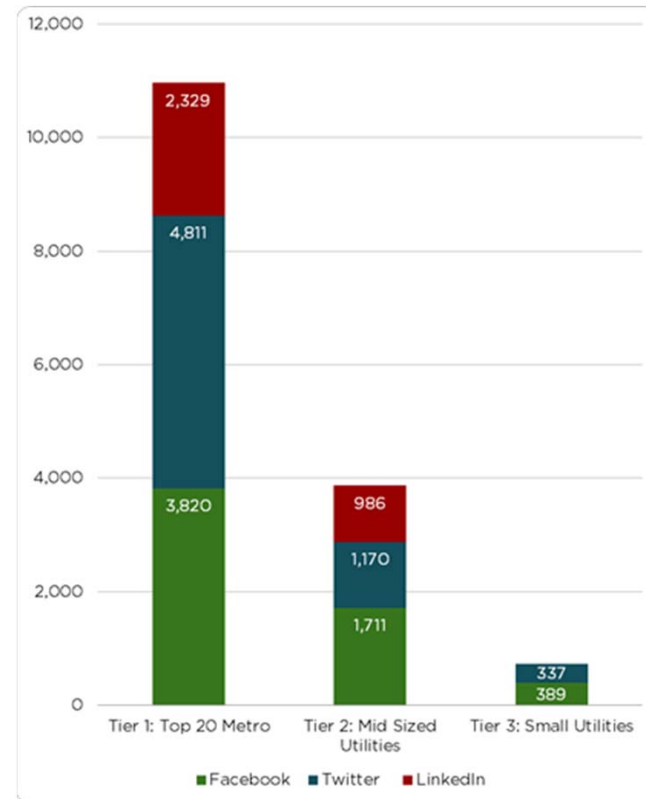
Expand

Reply Retweet Favorite Buffer More

Top Recommendation #5:

Utilities should reconsider their objections to paid advertising, especially during crisis situations

Utilities should consider boosting posts, or sponsoring tweets, at least during crisis, because even the most successful ones only reach very small audiences otherwise.



Top Recommendation #5:

Utilities should reconsider their objections to paid advertising, especially during crisis situations

Service	Average Cost to Reach 1,000	Average # of Clicks to Website	Average Cost Per Click to Website
Facebook	\$7.19	27	27 cents
Twitter	\$9 to \$11	37	25 to 30 cents

The Posting Skills Checklist



Social Media Posting Skills Checklist

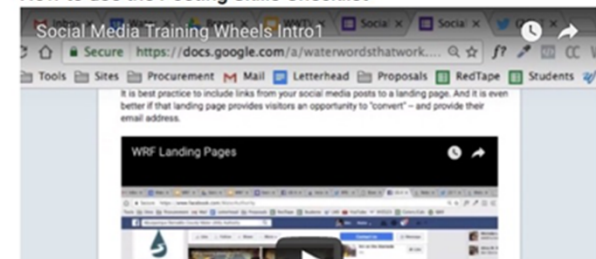
The "Training Wheels" is a tool for staff at clean water organizations who want to prepare top quality content for their organizational social media accounts. This tool is funded by the Water Research Foundation, and was developed by Water Words That Work, LLC.

The range of scores is between 0 and 60. You earn points by applying best practices to your Facebook posts and tweets.

With lower scores, your post or tweet will not travel far from your own account. With higher scores, Facebook and Twitter are more likely to pass your post or tweet along to your connections, and your post or tweet is more likely to turn up in search results, as well

THIS IS A WORKING MOCKUP OF THE SERVICE FOR REVIEW BY WRF AND ITS PROJECT ADVISORS. THIS IS NOT THE FINAL APPLICATION.

How to use the Posting Skills Checklist



<http://bit.ly/wrf-posting-checklist>

(Publicly available)

Questions & Answers

Deliverables:

- Customer Survey
- Benchmarking
- Literature Review
- Case Studies
- Executive Briefing - Publicly available
- Getting Started FAQ
- Posting Skills Checklist - Publicly available

Acknowledgements

Project Technical Advisory Committee

- John Lisle, District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority
- Andy Le, District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority
- Girma Moges, New York City Department of Environmental Protection
- John Gonzalez, Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District
- Leah Williams, New York City Department of Environmental Protection

Utility Partners

- Peter Eschbach, American Water, Northeast Division
- Andrew Bliss, Capital Region Water
- Laura Walker, City of Savannah Public Works & Resources Bureau
- Jennifer Kaiser, Vallejo Flood & Wastewater District
- Kenneth Klipstein, New Jersey Water Supply Authority

Contact Information

Alice Fulmer, Senior Research Manager
Water Research Foundation
303-347-6109

afulmer@waterrf.org

www.WaterRF.org

Eric Eckl, Owner

Water Words That Work, LLC
800-861-6012 x6

eric.eckl@waterwordsthatwork.com

Laura Ganus, Business Development Manager
Water Words That Work, LLC
800-861-6012 x2

laura.ganus@waterwordsthatwork.com

waterwordsthatwork.com

Project webpage: waterrf.org/4638