

This note is one of a series placed in the Clerks' Almanac by the Livery Committee. Most are written by its past chairman, of whom you may read more at the foot of the [Contact page](#). But this one was written by Paul D Jagger, Court Assistant of the Information Technologists. They are intended to be of guidance to livery clerks, especially new ones, or those seeking advice on a particular topic. They are not prescriptive, and how individual companies choose to conduct their affairs is, of course, entirely up to them.

Social Media Engagement Guidelines for Livery Companies, Ward Clubs and other City Associations

or 'Think before you Tweet'

Purpose

This document provides a simple set of guidelines to aid effective engagement on Social Media accounts (e.g., Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, etc).

These guidelines are principally aimed at Livery Company members and staff who are driving Social Media engagement on behalf of their Company via the Company's Social Media account(s) rather than via a personal Social Media account.

These guidelines may also be applied to the Social Media engagement activities of Ward Clubs, Guilds and other City of London associations.

The Golden Rule

When using Social Media your actions should pass the 'Mum' test, to wit: *Would I want my mum to see this?*

That applies to anything you write, any photos or videos you upload, any comments you make about postings by others, anything you endorse (e.g., 'like') or forward to others (e.g., retweet).

Keep it clean, wholesome, polite and well intentioned (see Rule 1 from The Rules for the Conduct of Life).

A few simple principles

1. At all times be aware that whatever you post will appear to others as the voice of the Livery Company. Your actions should be guided by how others will perceive them, which may not necessarily be how you intended them to be perceived.
2. Speak about the Company and others (followers, affiliates, friends, etc) as you would have them speak of your mother.
3. Maintain a professional approach, one that represents the Company in a positive manner that does credit to the City, to the Company and to yourself.

Guidelines for effective Social Media engagement

A) Focus your efforts

Livery Companies usually have common strategic purposes: Charity, Education, Industry, Civic Duty and Fellowship. Collectively these purposes are delivered through an immense range of events, activities, affiliations and partnerships - all amply sufficient to provide a wealth of material for engagement through Social Media.

This note is one of a series placed in the Clerks' Almanac by the Livery Committee. Most are written by its past chairman, of whom you may read more at the foot of the [Contact page](#). But this one was written by Paul D Jagger, Court Assistant of the Information Technologists. They are intended to be of guidance to livery clerks, especially new ones, or those seeking advice on a particular topic. They are not prescriptive, and how individual companies choose to conduct their affairs is, of course, entirely up to them.

When using the Company's Social Media accounts it is best to stick with topics that are linked to the strategic purposes of the Company and particularly the events, activities and partnerships that bring the strategy to life. Do feel free to engage with strategic partners on Social Media to maximise the reach of newsworthy stories, and capitalise on photos, quotes, links to relevant articles that support the message you wish to convey.

Your Social Media postings will build credibility and followership if they stay on topic with the purposes of the Company rather than stray into topics that have little or no relevance to the audience.

B) Be aware of your audience

Consider your audience when posting on Social Media. For example: Livery Company banquets provide a wealth of photographic opportunities of 'men in black tie' and 'fun with loving cups', but is that a topic which followers on Twitter or Instagram really want to see and hear about too often?

On the other hand, a small selection of appropriate photos from a social event posted under the Fellowship theme in our Instagram account may be entirely appropriate. A few happy, smiling faces at an informal meet up with an invite to fellow professionals in the same trade to come along to the next event is entirely appropriate to Tweet about.

A thought leadership paper may be better suited to posting within a Company's closed LinkedIn account, as would a discussion topic that requires extensive to and fro debate (e.g., "Should we move to a bigger Livery Hall").

Anything produced for a Company YouTube/Vimeo Channel should be of a professional quality. Short, amateur video clips 'in the moment' from the Lord Mayor's Show are fine for Tweeting, but if you want to put out a polished video to advertise your Hall then engage a media production company before you post to YouTube/Vimeo.

C) Be timely

Depending on which Social Media tool(s) you are using, the need to post in a timely manner will vary. Twitter in particular is a digital ticker-tape, a newsfeed where each Tweet has a 'best before' shelf life measured in 10-15 minute range, or less when Tweeting about a live event (e.g., The Lord Mayor's Show or Pancake Race), Instagram is a little more generous with the shelf-life of photos and LinkedIn posts can have an impact for a couple of days.

Wherever possible you should try to capitalise on the opportunity for greatest impact, especially where a live event is taking place such as the Lord Mayor's Show. You should also be aware of the times of the day when Social Media engagement is most likely to have an impact, for Twitter this is particularly true during commuting hours and around lunchtime (think about the time zone of your audience). YouTube video posting has a much higher impact toward the end of the working week and at weekends.

There is plenty of research on the web to support you in focus your message, using the right tools(s) to target your audience and selecting the best time to maximise engagement. There are tools that can be used to schedule Social Media postings so you don't have to be online and active at the moment you want the posting to be made.

D) Be sociable

Social Media engagement is a shared, collaborative and social experience, so do take the time to say thank you, to comment (constructively and in a friendly manner) on the postings of others, retweet where relevant and

This note is one of a series placed in the Clerks' Almanac by the Livery Committee. Most are written by its past chairman, of whom you may read more at the foot of the [Contact page](#). But this one was written by Paul D Jagger, Court Assistant of the Information Technologists. They are intended to be of guidance to livery clerks, especially new ones, or those seeking advice on a particular topic. They are not prescriptive, and how individual companies choose to conduct their affairs is, of course, entirely up to them.

appropriate, use social ranking tools such as 'likes', and acknowledge your followers. Engagement on Social Media will be far more successful if your posts are not limited to the sort of 'Now hear this!' broadcast from the bridge – avoid using Social Media like a megaphone, it will swiftly turn off your audience. If someone contacts you via Social Media always try to respond in a timely manner.

E) Reach out to those you wish to engage

It takes time and effort to build a followership, and even more effort to build engagement. Some techniques that help:

- Target organisations and individuals who are likely to share our values and interests (other Livery Companies, Corporation of London, Ward Clubs, Military units, Trade Associations, etc)
- Comment on Social Media postings by these organisations in a positive and encouraging manner, ideally linking to some purpose of the Company
- Share pictures that are likely to spark interest, positive comment and onward sharing – especially pictures of people in context of the subject (e.g., Master presenting a prize)
- Sustain your activity at a frequency appropriate to the Social Media channel you are using
- Be sparing in the use of hashtags, keep them short, memorable and stick to a maximum of two per posting (hashtags are something you create, there's no central authority that issues or maintains them)
- Do invite followers to click on a link to relevant web pages, blog posts, event booking page, etc – don't expect them to look deeper unless you provide a link to the event, article, etc that you are sharing news about

Some ideas for what to communicate on Social Media

The history, lore, customs and ceremonies of the City and its Livery Companies are generally well received, especially if coupled with an appropriate photo or video clip.

It is most effective to communicate on a particular timely theme, e.g., The Pancake Races, A noteworthy achievement by our school pupils (A level results?), A charity event in the City (e.g., The Lord Mayor's Big Curry Lunch) or sporting competition (e.g., Doggett's Coat and Badge), especially if you also like, forward, retweet the posts of other Livery Companies.

Highlighting the work of other Livery Companies in Charity, Education, Industry (Occupation), Civic Duty and Fellowship will gain friends and followers. It will also engender a spirit of reciprocity. This is another reason not to use Social Media just to broadcast, rather to communicate. Keep in mind that Social Media is... social, it's not 'all about me' and what my Company is doing.

Short video clips and montage photos (as Twitter permits you to add) work particularly well and tend to spark lots of engagement.

Who to follow

At the time of writing, more than three quarters of the Livery Companies and most of the City's major civic institutions have a presence on Social Media. It's a good idea to follow all the Livery Companies, Mansion House, Guildhall, Old Bailey, Inns of Court, the Lord Mayor's Appeal, professional bodies linked with City professions,

This note is one of a series placed in the Clerks' Almanac by the Livery Committee. Most are written by its past chairman, of whom you may read more at the foot of the [Contact page](#). But this one was written by Paul D Jagger, Court Assistant of the Information Technologists. They are intended to be of guidance to livery clerks, especially new ones, or those seeking advice on a particular topic. They are not prescriptive, and how individual companies choose to conduct their affairs is, of course, entirely up to them.

educational institutions linked with the City and military units that have a City affiliation. Likewise the City Churches, Ward Clubs and individual Aldermen and Common Councilmen are worth connecting with.

For that purpose I maintain a list of Twitter accounts for all the City Livery Companies, Twitter being the most prevalent and active form of Social Media engagement by the Companies.

Who and what to avoid

Deal with trolls, conspiracy theorists and political activists in a calm, objective and polite manner if indeed you choose to grace them with just a single response. More often than not it is best to ignore, mute or block them rather than take the bait. Rude, threatening or offensive accounts should be blocked – don't engage them. There are plenty of ne'er-do-wells who use Social Media in an attempt to gain an audience and following that would simply point and laugh at them if they voiced their opinions at speakers corner – best not to give them the publicity they crave or grace them with a followership that boosts their ego.

Lastly, and linking back to the Golden Rule, there are some topics that are best left for your private discussions on Social Media rather than when representing the Company, they include: Religion, Politics and Personal Relationships.

Paul D Jagger

11th August 2017

Was this note helpful? Do you have comment? Email nrpullman@btinternet.com