



# Social Media *Guidelines*

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**FOR BRANCH OPERATIONS**





## **ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK**

This handbook is to provide staff and volunteers at Legion Commands and Branches with information and resources to support their use of social media and help reach their online goals. Share this document with all who support your operations. Social media works across many levels within a Command or Branch and depending on a campaign's goal, an effective campaign will likely require collaboration between two or more individuals or working groups.

There are many social media platforms your Branch can use to convey your messages... Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, Pinterest, Google+, LinkedIn, etc. For this document, we will focus on Facebook and Twitter accounts. You can use many of these same concepts in other social media platforms.

Please note this document does not provide a comprehensive social media strategy or information on all tools and resources available. It is a basic guide to help Commands and Branches move into social media to support their goals.

*Social media is neither the magical solution to every non-profit's woes, nor is it something that can be ignored. It is a channel for engaging, involving, entertaining and soliciting your constituents – One which cannot be thought of only in the context of a social media strategy, but rather as a part of an overall communications strategy working in concert with mail, phone, email, events, etc.”*

~ Devin T. Mathias, Marts & Lundy



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# Social Media and the Legion

Social media has become one of the most powerful tools to reach a large audience quickly, efficiently and effectively. It involves building relationships and engaging with your audience in an unprecedented way. It can be used to share and promote information, increase your audience base, convert fans into members, volunteers and donors, support fundraising initiatives, and foster community engagement.

The Legion's online presence was developed over time through consistent branding, messaging and engagement. As the Legion works to support and grow our online presence, we are able to create a stronger organization and a more positive image of the Legion with the Canadian public.

One of the best ways you can grow the Legion's online brand, and grow and support your Branch's goals and objectives is to be online and actively engaged with your audience. A strong online presence will help you engage your current members, reach and recruit potential new members, and spread the word on all the great things you do within your community. It's word-of-mouth in its most efficient form.

If used consistently, your social media platforms become a key communication and engagement tool for your Branch. Promote them aggressively using the following guidelines:

- Put your social media links on all your communications, including your website, email signature, business cards, newsletters, posters, media releases, and other advertising.
- Mention your social media platforms at monthly meetings, events and Branch activities.
- Follow other Facebook pages and Twitter accounts, and encourage your followers to share your posts.
- Promote your Twitter account on Facebook, and promote your Facebook page on Twitter.
- Share posts from Legion Commands and Branches that would be of interest to your followers. It's a great way to introduce your followers to the wider Legion organization.

If your Branch is new to social media, we encourage you to start slowly. As you gain followers and become comfortable with social media, you can become more active online. And remember, we at Dominion Command are here to help. Ask us any questions you may have.

For assistance with any social media questions, please contact **marketing@legion.ca**

# Sample Social Media Policy

Dominion Command encourages Commands and Branches to implement an internal social media policy to provide direction around member/employee use of online communications. The policy encourages those who use social media on behalf of the Branch to enhance the organization's brand and objectives, and abide by a set of expectations around appropriate online behavior. The following is a sample policy that can be adapted for your needs.

## **SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

Legion members and employees can have a significant and positive impact on growing the Legion's online brand. Together we can spread the word on the Legion's mission, activities, membership benefits, and impact in the community, and work together to reach a wider audience.

### **Follow the 2 S's to Grow Your Legion**

Our members and employees are Ambassadors of the Legion, and we support and encourage you to share your pride and support of Legion activities through your online networks. Follow these 2 S's to share your pride and support!

- 1. Share your pride.** We are proud of our Legion, our members, and our successes! Follow the Legion online through [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) and [Flickr](#), and share our posts with your family, friends and followers.
- 2. Support your Legion.** There is strength and power in numbers and the Legion needs all the support we can get to help Canadian Veterans, their families, and our communities. We encourage all members and employees to show your support of the Legion through your online network and ask your followers to get involved, become a member, and show their support for our Veterans.



## Abide by the 4 R's of Appropriate Behaviour in Social Media

The 4 R's were developed to help protect the member or employee, ensure comments will not expose the organization to legal problems or embarrassment, and offer guidelines to contributing to a positive online experience.

- 1. Represent yourself.** Be honest and transparent. If posting information about the Legion through your online network, identify yourself as a Legion member or employee and make it clear the opinions expressed are yours and do not represent the official views of the Legion.
- 2. Responsibility.** Make sure that what you're saying is factually correct (don't say anything contradictory to the Legion's website or our stated positions). If you see misrepresentations made about the Legion in the media, you may point that out. Always do so with respect and with the facts. Don't provide confidential information such as unpublished details on current or future Legion projects. Don't violate copyright laws or confidentiality policies.
- 3. Respect.** What you say online is a permanent record, so don't say anything online you wouldn't feel comfortable saying to the whole organization. Use your best judgement, be considerate of privacy concerns, and be sensitive around topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory. Use reasonable etiquette, the same as you would offline, and avoid engaging in online arguments.
- 4. Restraint.** Before you hit that send button, pause and reread. If you wouldn't want that particular thought forever associated with your name, or if you think there could be negative consequences from your post, don't post it.

There is strength and power in numbers. When it comes to social media, the viral nature of information sharing online is an effective and powerful way to reach a vast audience. When we use social media well, the positive impact can be enormous.

# Build Your Branch's Social Media Presence

## CREATE YOUR FACEBOOK ACCOUNT

Creating a Facebook page for your Command or Branch is an effective way to share information with a wider audience and engage your followers in relevant news, events and activities.

Dominion Command suggests Commands and Branches create a Facebook “page” rather than a “group”. Pages are designed for organizations who want to interact with their fans or members without having them connected to a personal account. Pages also allow other pages and organizations to follow and share their posts. Groups on the other hand are designed to come from an individual. When you post something as a group administrator, it appears to be coming from you and is attached to your personal profile. For more information around the difference between pages and groups, visit: [www.facebook.com/help/155275634539412](http://www.facebook.com/help/155275634539412).

Follow these instructions to create a page: <https://www.facebook.com/business/products/pages>.

## TIPS FOR BUILDING YOUR FACEBOOK PAGE

Large organizations such as the Legion can use social media to support and grow the organization's brand.

- When selecting your page type, choose “Company, Organization or Institution”, and then select “Non-Profit Organization” from the drop down list. We strongly suggest you do not use “bar/club” as your company type, as this does not reflect our organization's mission or brand.
- For your branch name we suggest the following naming convention: *Legion (insert branch name) Branch # (insert number) (insert city)*. Having the words ‘Legion’ and your city in the name helps when someone is searching for your branch on Facebook.

- Fill in your page “About” section as completely as possible. In addition to information about your Command or Branch, you may wish to include general information on the Legion. You can use the Dominion Command About page as a guide: <https://www.facebook.com/CanadianLegion/info>.
- Update your Facebook page URL to a memorable, branded URL. We suggest you include the word Legion and your city (or province if a Provincial Command) in the URL.
- You have the option to link to a website. If you do not have a Command or Branch website, link your Facebook page to the [www.legion.ca](http://www.legion.ca) website

Facebook pages allow you to identify a number of ‘page administrators’ who can post content, remove content and administer the page. We recommend your Command or Branch chooses at least two “Managers” for your page, so if one Manager leaves the Branch or is no longer looking after the Facebook page, the other can transfer that person’s Admin privileges to another person.

## **BUILD YOUR TWITTER ACCOUNT**

Twitter offers a wonderful opportunity to share short, targeted messages, photos and website links with a huge and diverse audience.

Follow these instructions to create an account: <https://support.twitter.com/articles/100990>.

To sign up on Twitter, you must use an email account. We recommend you use an email account that more than one person in your Command or Branch has access to. This will ensure continued access to the account, regardless of who is responsible for updating it.

### **TIPS FOR BUILDING YOUR TWITTER PROFILE**

To align your Twitter account with the Legion brand, follow these guidelines:

- Your Twitter user name may only have up to 15 characters. We suggest choosing a name with a combination of your Command or Branch name or number, your city, and/or the word Legion. For example: @LegionABNWT OR @CentennialBr285 OR @RCLCentennial OR @LegionCalgary.
- If you do not have a Command or Branch website or Facebook page, link your Twitter page to the [www.legion.ca](http://www.legion.ca) website.
- Your Twitter “About” section can contain up to 160 characters. Include a description of your services and activities, or use a more generic description of the Legion. You can use the Dominion Command Twitter description as a guide: <https://twitter.com/RoyalCdnLegion>.

# Creating Engaging Content

One of the most important tasks in social media is developing and sharing engaging content with your followers. Producing great social media content for your Command or Branch can be a trial and error process. Try different types of content and messaging, and learn what is producing the most engagement from your audience.

Below are some of common types of posts Commands and Branches might produce through social media.

CONTENT TYPE	ATTRIBUTES
<b>Promotion of services, programs and events</b>	<p>The services the Legion provides to Veterans, and the programs Branches offer to members are the driving force behind what we do, and often the reason why people become members in the first place.</p> <p>Promote the services you offer to Veterans, and the good work you do in your community. Where possible, share personal stories from individuals and organizations that benefited from your services.</p> <p>Promote upcoming Branch activities, events and volunteer opportunities that are open to members or the public. The more active your Branch is, the more the community will get involved. Post photos of your activities and tell your followers how things went.</p>
<b>Sharing Legion articles</b>	<p>If your Branch writes articles or news releases, post your articles on social media. It's a great way to share your articles with a wider audience. Keep your members in the loop on wider Legion news.</p> <p>Share national Legion news with your fans by following and sharing Provincial and Dominion Command posts and updates.</p>
<b>Engagement</b>	<p>Social media is a great way to stay in touch and engage your current member base. Ask your members questions about what they'd like to see at the Branch. Encourage them to comment on discussion topics or share your posts. Ask members to post their photos of Legion activities.</p>

<p><b>Engagement, cont'd</b></p>	<p>Encourage your followers to use your Facebook or Twitter page as another way for people to communicate with the Branch (just be sure to monitor your page frequently and respond to questions promptly).</p> <p>Posting questions and discussion topics are, by nature, engaging to fans. Consider posting discussion topics around Veteran issues, Branch initiatives and community news.</p> <p>Listen to your online fans to gain a better perspective of how your Branch can best serve Veterans, your community and your members.</p>
<p><b>News Stories</b></p>	<p>Share, comment on and link to local or national news that is relevant to your members and followers. Your Command or Branch has the opportunity to be recognized by the community as a primary source for Veteran and community news.</p>
<p><b>Fundraising and member recruitment</b></p>	<p>Although the primary goal of social media should not be fundraising or recruitment, Branches nevertheless shouldn't be afraid of reminding fans and followers of the benefits they bring, and in turn, asking for new members or donations. Be sure to highlight what their contributions provide and show examples of their membership or donations at work.</p>
<p><b>Affiliated organizations</b></p>	<p>Sharing important, engaging and relevant messages from like-minded, credible organizations is a great way to promote a common message. Start following organizations with similar interests to the Legion through social media, and share their messages where appropriate.</p>

Follow and share National Legion messages from the Dominion Command Facebook and Twitter accounts.

[facebook.com/CanadianLegion](https://www.facebook.com/CanadianLegion)

[twitter.com/RoyalCdnLegion](https://twitter.com/RoyalCdnLegion)

When posting content through social media, it's wise to follow expectations established in online communities. Below is a quick tip sheet of do's and don'ts when managing your social media content.

SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT DO'S	SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT DON'TS
<p><b>Be personable, transparent, and authentic.</b></p> <p><b>Be relevant and informative. Post content about timely topics.</b></p> <p><b>Post a variety of content types (see above).</b></p> <p><b>Include photos or web links where possible. People are more likely to read a post with a picture or link.</b></p> <p><b>Establish online routines to create consistency and continuity. You may wish to create routines such as posting discussion topics on a certain day... something for your fans to look forward to.</b></p> <p><b>Try to post daily, or a few days per week. If you go too long without an update, you may lose credibility and, in turn, your audience.</b></p>	<p>Don't use social media as a one-way broadcast platform. Use it to engage and converse with your audience.</p> <p>Don't neglect replies and comments. Respond to tweets, mentions, and comments in your social media space. If you feel a comment is not an issue you can resolve online, don't hesitate to transfer the conversation to a private space by providing the follower with the phone number, email, or other contact details. See page 14 for guidelines on managing negative comments.</p> <p>Don't be a parrot. Repetitive content is one of the top reasons people choose to stop following online.</p> <p>Short updates are the best way to inform your audience without overloading them. Avoid posting too often... multiple messages back to back are another key reason people stop following. Aim for approximately 1-5 posts/week on Facebook, and 1-5 posts/day on Twitter (spread throughout the day).</p>

# Sharing Provincial and Branch Updates Through Dominion Command

Dominion Command maintains an online presence through our website, and through [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) and [Flickr](#). We share Legion and Veteran news that would be of interest on a national level, and use social media to engage our target audiences.

While Dominion Command focuses its messaging and content on national level issues and interests, we encourage Provincial Commands and Branches to bring to our attention Command or Branch activities that we may share to a national audience. Topics that may be considered for sharing include:

- Provincial Command or Branch initiatives that would be of interest on a national level.
- Significant support to national organizations, or large donations (over \$10,000) to veteran initiatives.
- Web links to Branch articles on significant member contributions.
- Web links to Branch articles on the impact a Branch made on a Veteran's life.

To submit a suggested inclusion on Dominion Command's social media platforms, please send a description of the initiative (with URL link if available) to the Marketing Department at Dominion Command at [\*\*marketing@legion.ca\*\*](mailto:marketing@legion.ca).



# Managing Negative Comments on Social Media

The Legion supports and advocates for Veterans. At times, issues around Veterans can become controversial, bringing together differing and sometimes conflicting views from government agencies, Veterans organizations, Veterans and their families, and the Canadian public. This can result in negative comments or feedback on our social media platforms. Negative comments offer an opportunity to resolve an issue, fix an error, or educate the audience on the Legion's position.

## COMMUNITY GUIDELINES FOR FACEBOOK

To support your Command's or Branch's efforts in maintaining a positive online experience for your Facebook fans, we recommend you set Community Guidelines. These are a set of 'rules' for your online community, and outlines the conditions in which a comment may be deleted.

Below is an example, adapted from the Community Guidelines from Dominion Command's Facebook page: (posted on the 'About' page, under the 'Products' section so that they are always visible). Adapt as needed.

[www.facebook.com/canadianlegion](http://www.facebook.com/canadianlegion)

Thank you for being a part of the Legion's Facebook community! The Royal Canadian Legion Branch ### Facebook page shares information, updates, events, and discussion topics to create awareness and support around Veterans issues, and to educate our fans on Legion initiatives and membership.

We encourage all Facebook fans to actively participate in conversations on our page, including posting on our wall and sharing comments. It's important to note the views and opinions expressed by our fans are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Legion. While user comments are not edited for accuracy, to ensure a positive experience for the community, we may report or remove content or commentary that does not meet our posting guidelines.

## POSTING GUIDELINES

We reserve the right to remove postings that:

- are abusive, defamatory, slanderous, threatening, offensive or obscene
- are in violation of another's intellectual property or privacy rights
- are in violation of any law or regulation
- are fraudulent, deceptive or misleading
- are intended to provoke arguments
- are spamming, including posting the same comment on multiple posts
- are off-topic
- are commercial solicitations or solicitation of donations
- contain surveys, contests, petitions, or unsolicited messages
- are link baiting (embedding a link in your post to draw traffic to your own site)
- contain prohibited material subject to the Facebook 'Terms of Use'.

To ensure the Legion's Facebook page remains relevant and respectful, we also reserve the right to ban individuals who consistently post messages that do not meet our guidelines.

## QUESTIONS?

We welcome active discussion and questions on our page, and encourage our fans to share our page and posts with your followers. If you post a question, we will do our best to get back to you as quickly as possible or direct you to someone who can answer your question.

If you have questions or comments related to your membership status, please contact your Branch directly.

You may contact the Branch at: <insert contact information>

Thank you for participating on Branch ###'s Facebook page!

## **RESPONDING TO NEGATIVE COMMENTS ON FACEBOOK**

It's important that complaints and issues your followers pose on your social media accounts are addressed where possible. A response that illustrates respect and understanding for a person's concerns will indicate your intention to rectify any problems.

In dealing with negative comments, take a step back and put yourself in the person's shoes. This can go a long way in understanding why he or she is frustrated. If the comment poses a general question or minor issue, respond to clarify or resolve the issue. If the comment is around a complicated issue, provide a short response to clarify your position, and let the person know that they can contact you directly to address their issue. If the comment addresses an experience they had with the Legion, whether or not the fault lies on our end, a simple statement saying we regret the experience they are having and will forward their complaint to the appropriate person can go a long way in keeping our members (and potential members) happy. If the comment states a negative opinion, and is not a question or asking for a response, we can acknowledge their opinion and appreciate that they care enough about Veterans to voice their views.

As a general rule, page administrators should not remove negative posts. Not everyone is going to have a glowing review of our organization. Social media users know this, and if they see nothing but positive comments, they'll assume the Legion is deleting negative posts.

There are a number of ways to respond to a negative comment:

- Respond directly to the post. Be factual, and avoid engaging in an emotionally negative discussion. This is the first and best option to use when appropriate. It allows the Legion to clarify or address a complaint and shows our fans that we are responsive and proactive. It also can offer an opportunity to educate our fans about an issue. Do not respond or engage in the emotional content of their comment. Factually address only the question or complaint, or correct a false statement or claim they made.

- Let your fan base respond. Often your followers will be your biggest supporters and advocates.
- Respond through an email. If the person provided their contact information, we can send a direct email or phone call to address the comment in detail. You may also provide them with your Command or Branch's contact information and request they contact you to resolve the issue if it is too complicated or private in nature to be addressed online.
- Respond through a direct message. This option is only available if the person sends their comment through a direct message. Direct messages on Facebook are private and not viewable by your followers.
- Hide the post. If an attempt has been made to address a comment, yet the individual is unreceptive to your attempts or continues to post opinions, you may consider hiding the post. This allows the post to remain but hides it from most of your followers to help maintain a positive online community.
- Ban the individual. If the offended party is blatantly hostile and only active in your community to start arguments, banning the individual is a last-resort option. And anyone leveling expletives or racial slurs should be banned.

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**NOTE TO BRANCHES: When a negative comment directed at or in regards to a specific Legion Branch or Provincial Command comes in through Dominion Command's social media channels, Dominion Command will acknowledge the comment and direct the individual to the Branch or Provincial Command in question, per the established chain of command. Where appropriate, complaints will follow the Complaints Appeals process of the General By-Laws.**

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# Social Media Measurement

Measuring and reporting the activity around content on social media allows your Command or Branch to better understand which content is most desired by your audience, and in the end, to produce content that is most engaging and help you reach your online goals.

The simplest way to evaluate the success of your content is to record the most engaging posts and categorize them by type of content. Keeping track of these facts over time will allow you to understand what excites your social media audience and what content to create in the future.

Below are some possible metrics to consider for Facebook and Twitter. It is helpful to track these to see change over time.

PLATFORM	METRICS	WHAT SHOULD YOU BE LOOKING AT?
Facebook	<b># of Likes</b> <b>Comments on posts</b> <b>Shares on posts</b> <b>Reach on posts</b> <b>Facebook Insights</b>	Facebook includes metrics data on each of your posts, as well as for your overall page engagement. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• For each post, track the number of likes, comments, shares and organic reach a posting receives. These metrics will help identify the types of posts that produce the most engagement.</li><li>• Track the number of negative comments a post receives to get a sense of the types of posts that provoke debate, and to consider topics that you may wish to address in the future.</li><li>• Track the number of page likes for your Facebook page to gauge increases in followers after posts are added.</li><li>• Check your page's 'Insights' section (available once you reach 30 followers to your page) for more metrics: Are there spikes in activity? What produced those spikes? Who is making up your audience? What kind of content and messaging receives the most engagement?</li></ul>

PLATFORM	METRICS	WHAT SHOULD YOU BE LOOKING AT?
Twitter	<p><b># of Followers</b></p> <p><b>Re-tweets</b></p> <p><b>Mentions</b></p> <p><b>Replies</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your profile will indicate your number of followers.</li> <li>• When you click on one of your posts you will see the number of re-tweets, likes and replies. These indicate which types of messages are most likely to be shared with a wider audience.</li> <li>• You also can track mentions (when someone includes your Twitter name in their message). This is a direct form of engagement, and we recommend you reply to or acknowledge those posts. To track mentions, click on 'Notifications' at the top of your page, and select 'Mentions'.</li> <li>• The number of followers you have is not necessarily an indication of successful messaging... at least not at first. However, the higher your number of followers, the more people that are receiving your messages. It is helpful to follow those who follow you, especially those who may share similar interests. This encourages sharing of information and allows you to see what your followers are tweeting about.</li> </ul>

For more detailed analytics, use free online tools such as [www.hootsuite.com](http://www.hootsuite.com).

## Boost your Reach on Social Media

To grow your reach and get your message out to a wider audience, consider boosting your post. Both Facebook and Twitter allow you to ‘boost’ a post, which means you pay to have it show up on other people’s news feeds, even though they are not direct followers of your page.

Boosting posts on Facebook has been extremely effective for Dominion Command. In a three month period in 2016, Dominion Command was able to reach 1.2 million Canadians on Facebook through our posts. That’s a big number, and part of that is because we boost or pay to promote significant posts. This is something your branch can easily do and is very affordable.

For a very small amount of money, you can narrow down who sees your post by where they live, their age, their gender, and their interests. You can also select how long you want to boost the post for, from a day to a week or longer, and payment can be made through credit card or PayPal.

For example, let’s say your Branch is hosting a community BBQ fundraiser in Saskatoon Saskatchewan in support of Veterans in your area. If you have 100 followers on your Facebook page, your post may typically reach about 16% of your followers, or around 16 people in this case. Now if boost that post, you can target an audience who you think would be interested in the event. For example, individuals who:

- live in Saskatoon,
- are 25 years of age and older,
- Are male and female,
- with interests in Veterans, family, BBQs, community events, and volunteering.

That audience on Facebook is around 47,000 people. For just \$25, you can boost that post for a week, and your message jumps from being seen by 16 people, to being seen by between 800 to 2000 people over the week! Of course, the more money you put behind it, the more people it will reach.

This is a great option to use when you want to let your community know about who you are, what you do, and opportunities people can get involved in.

### **Keep the momentum going!**

Social media can help you widen your audience, engage your members and potential members, and create positive relationships that will help turn that into membership growth. Take baby steps and work your way into the online world through **planning**, **writing great posts**, **engaging with your online community**, and **working to grow your reach**.



## **GOT QUESTIONS?**

Contact Dominion Command at  
**[marketing@legion.ca](mailto:marketing@legion.ca)**

**We're here to help!**

**Dominion Command**

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