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SOCIAL MEDIA

COMMUNICATION FOR THE FUTURE

Local chapters and state associations are faced with the need for increased community awareness. NALS of Greater Kalamazoo's President, Cathy A. Zackery, CLP, recently contacted Lydia Goodner at the NALS Resource Center expressing an interest in creating a social media chair for NALS of Michigan. Their idea was not only to increase community awareness, but also to share and discuss content on LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, and a blog of articles.

Members are encouraged to follow the social media content from their local chapters and state associations as well as chapters in other states. Having a secondary membership is also a great way to find out what

other chapters are doing and to get ideas that could be implemented in your own chapter. Social media is a fantastic initiative that benefits NALS and legal professionals everywhere.

The questions posed by NALS of Michigan were:

- Are you (Lydia) the only person managing the social media accounts or do you have a team?
- Did you set up a special email address for those accounts?
- How much time do you spend weekly managing the Twitter and Facebook accounts?
- How often do you try to post something? Daily? Weekly?
- How do you manage the negative responses? Do you just delete and block the user?

Initial Suggestions

Before these questions can be answered, the chapter or state association needs to put some thought into their social media platform. NALS members are volunteers, and many volunteers are strapped for time. When it comes to managing social media, you want to get the most bang out of the time spent. The initial recommendation is to focus on a Facebook group and/or page and Instagram. Twitter is a bit of a time-waster where much of your content will not produce a "return." Facebook and Instagram will give you a better return on time invested.

Administrators and Setups

Once you have decided on your social media platform, the question of Administrators needs to be addressed. At the NALS Resource Center, Lydia is the only person managing the social media accounts on a full-time basis. However, she does have the Executive Director as an Administrator on the Facebook page and group. The Administrator placement is just as a back-up in case she is out sick or cannot fully answer a question, in which case the Administrator can step in and answer any potential questions. Lydia uses her work email address for the accounts and setups. If your chapter has a designated email address or something that is shared, then use that email address. Just make sure you have the right access to the email for account confirmation. It is not recommended to use a personal or work email address for these account setups. If the accounts are compromised or deleted, then anyone who comes behind you can still access the account.

Getting Time On Your Side

The next step is probably the most important—deciding on a communication plan and setting goals. A suggestion is to plan three months at a time so that you can still be flexible with communications, but still have goals.

For example, NALS now has an Instagram account. The sole focus and communication is on celebrating life moments among legal professionals everywhere. Every morning Lydia spends about 30 minutes rummaging through hashtags like: #paralegal; #paralegallife; #legalpros; #NALSPALS; and #NALSorg to share other people's posts to the NALS feed, congratulating them, and wishing them success. She also uses an iPhone app called 'Repost' to do this. It is a great way to start conversations online with individuals who might not know your chapter exists. Check out the NALS Instagram account at: <https://www.instagram.com/nalsorg/>

Doing this for your chapter could be just as easy. All you would need to do is search hashtags like #[yourcityname]; and #[yourstatename]. This is a good way to promote chapter awareness, which can lead to potential partnerships, sponsorships, and community engagement.

In maintaining the Facebook page, Lydia spends about 3-4 hours per week gathering information and creating graphic posts for three weeks. She makes sure all of the NALS national events are placed on the page, first and foremost, so that she can share a reminder in the future without having to rewrite the information. Posts are typically shared with links from the NALS website or images that she finds. You can also share content directly from the NALS (national) page to support your chapter efforts. Here is an example: <https://www.facebook.com/CountyLegalProfessionalsAssociation>.

A Facebook group is a FANTASTIC tool. Typically any members you add will create their own conversation at their own pace, PLUS what they post can give you some content ideas. Your main priority is to moderate the conversation. If you would like, you can see a 'Pinned Post' in the NALS Group here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/associationforlegalpros>. Feel free to copy the relevant bits for your own group.

Facebook also launched a way to ask questions to those who want to join the group. This means you can ask where the person works, if they are

a member, and if they are interested in being a member. These questions could give you leads and insight on those who join your group.

It's All About the Timing

The main key to a successful social media campaign is consistency. If members and non-members expect you to post once per week, be sure you do it at least once per week. Lydia currently reposts about three images to Instagram every weekday morning. She also posts in the NALS Facebook page about one time per week. She rarely posts in the Facebook group, but does moderate and monitor the discussions.

What About Negativity?

Negativity is unavoidable. Never just ignore and/or delete a negative post. That can typically come back to bite you. Ultimately, stay calm and be polite. Professionalism is key; remember you are representing your chapter and what that means to the profession and to you.

If someone posts a negative review or comment, there are three things that can be done. Thank them for their opinion (Try not to be formal. Just a short comment saying "thanks for reaching out to us" should be fine.), apologize for the inconvenience ("sorry to hear that you're having problems with our product / you didn't like our services"), and encourage them to send you a private message to discuss further solutions. If the consistent negative posting continues, you could then go through measures to remove and block, but only if necessary.

As a national association, the health of state and local chapters is important so anything the NALS Resource Center can do to encourage community will be welcomed.

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